

Rise of the Reclaimers

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Summary: The universe is poised on the edge of total destruction. To save what they hold dear two warriors will forge a forbidden alliance and an ancient race will emerge from the shadows to claim their place. Reclaimers Trilogy part 2

1. Prologue

****Disclaimer: ****I do not own Halo it belongs to Bungie. I do however own most of the characters that appear in this story.

****_Author's Note:_**** this story is the sequel to my last fanfic 'Stranded'. Although it is not required to read that story it is recommended.

RISE OF THE RECLAIMERS

Prologue:

Jimaelhae swung his plasma rifle in a horizontal arc. The weapon smashed against the marine's jaw. The human fell to the ground, blood running from his mouth. The Sangheili warrior let out a small snarl, placing a foot on the unconscious man's back. Jimaelhae fired a shot into the back of the marine's neck.

Bullets came from behind a concrete shield. Jimaelhae's shields flared, and he returned fire ducking behind cover. His rifle overheated, the vents on the sides opened as gas emitted from the weapon.

An Unggoy screeched as another Sangheili warrior fell. The cowardly foot soldier began to run when Jimaelhae stood and grabbed it by the front of its armor. Jimaelhae lifted the fearful Unggoy from the ground.

"Do not flee, or I shall tear out your throat," Jimaelhae commanded. The Unggoy looked over the Sangheili's red armor, before being

dropped to the ground. It immediately ran off.

Jimaelhae picked up his fallen brethren's plasma rifle in his empty hand, and advanced along with the other covenant troops towards the human position. Marines began firing at the oncoming assault. Unfortunately the humans were outnumbered by fresh troops, while they were tired and wounded.

"Forward troops, crush the human scum," Jimaelhae yelled above the din of battle.

He started running across the scarred battleground towards the concrete bunker the humans were hiding in. Bullets began ripping through the air, tearing into the covenant forces. Unggoy were falling by the handful, their screeches barely heard beneath the gunfire.

A Kig-Yar's energy shield gave out under the human weaponry, and it was torn apart. A Kig-Yar sniper took a shot from the jungle surrounding the torn field. The bright blue beam killed one of the hapless marines.

Jimaelhae was just in front of the bunker now, he saw nothing else. His powerful legs sent him into a jump that landed him on top of the bunker. A marine screamed and fired his assault rifle, but twin streams of plasma cut his life short.

Another Sangheili jumped onto the bunker roof, cradling a carbine.

"Let us kill the humans, brother," he said.

Jimaelhae and the other warrior entered the bunker through the staircase that opened onto the roof. Surprised marines turned and began firing at the invaders. Plasma from the outside covenant began to enter through the firing slit killing some of the marines.

Jimaelhae sent out a steady stream of bright blue energy into the humans, punctuated with the green bursts of radioactive ammunition from the carbine. Soon enough all that was left of the humans were smoldering corpses.

Jimaelhae savored the smell of burning flesh. It was his victory, he had earned it.

* * *

>Barkarus stretched out a bloody arm. The Elites had ruined everything. The fools that they were. The Arbiter was even helping the humans, what madness was this? The wounded Brute looked from his position on the blood slick floor to his dead Chieftain.<p><p>

Tartarus had a neat hole through his head from the Arbiter's carbine. The great brute's brains had splattered on a short half wall behind his limp corpse. His mighty war-hammer was still held in dead fingers.

It was what Barkarus was reaching for. The icon of the brute

chieftain. With Tartarus dead the prophets would need someone to lead the brutes against the traitorous elites, the human scum, and the parasite that was spreading too quickly across Halo.

With a grunt of pain Barkarus's fingers brushed against the cold metal of the war-hammer shaft. He tightened his grip and dragged the weapon towards him, ignoring the pain it caused in his arm.

Tartarus's fingers released the icon and Barkarus pulled it close to himself, then using it as a crutch he stood. He felt semi-healed wounds reopen, and his blood begin to flow over his fur again, but he ignored it.

Barkarus stood tall and proud amongst the corpses of elites and brutes. He was now chieftain, he would now claim his revenge, and crush those who opposed the covenant. The first to die would be the elites and the humans left on the ancient ring, then he would take the fight to the human homeworld.

That would mean he had to find the Arc the oracle had been talking about. Barkarus turned, and began to walk from the Halo's fire control center.

* * *

>The Gravemind's tentacles stirred in agitation. Halo had been prevented from firing, yes this was a good thing. Unfortunately many other pathways it had not seen before had been laid. Perhaps the reclaimers had more power than it originally anticipated.<p><p>

It's tentacles made their way through the empty halls of High Charity, marked with blood and the scars of battle. It was here the elites and brutes has turned on each other starting the civil war, it was here the flood found transportation, and it was here that the rampaging reclaimer known as the Master Chief had found a way back home.

But what was this?

The A.I. was left behind. Perhaps she had answers. The end was approaching fast, yet this was still just the beginning.

The battle had ended and the war was about to begin.

2. Campfire Tension

Chapter 1: Campfire Tension

The crackle of the fire, and the sounds of the soft flowing river just behind it slowly drew Jimaelhae from his memories. Memories from just a few hours ago. Everything had changed since then however, everything he had known had been shaken down to the very foundations of his faith. He didn't know what to believe anymore.

A growl emanated from the woods, and the elite snapped his head in the direction of the noise, his hand raising the carbine slightly.

"They won't attack," a voice said from the fire.

Jimaelhae turned to regard the marine sitting by the fire with his hands in his armpits, trying to retain as much warmth as he could. The fire was helping greatly, and so was the heat of the jungle. The waters from which the marine had been dragged were nearly frigid though, and until he was dry hypothermia would be an enemy.

His name was Sgt. Nathan Little, the sole survivor of Platoon 6. His armor was thrown in a pile just behind him. It was still in good condition except for the chest plate which had a large gouge across it. When Jimaelhae dragged him from the river the human had been near death, so Jimaelhae bandaged the wound tight stopping the blood flow.

"How do you know that?" Jimaelhae asked.

"Individually, they are damned stupid. However their attacks in the jungle were too well coordinated and thought out. Something is controlling them, and so will hold them back until there is enough out there to make a good attempt at killing us. Or it could be that two worn soldiers just aren't worth it," Nathan said, staring into the fire, watching the bright flames consume the wood, and the corpses of the elites that had been killed by earlier flood attacks. The extra weapons were piled beside Nathan's armor.

Jimaelhae turned back to the woods with a 'hunh'. He knew the marine was probably right. From his tale Nathan was more experienced with the flood. A run through the jungle, betrayed by one of his own, and hunted by the flood at every turn.

His situation hadn't improved much. Now sharing a campfire with a creature who should by all rights be smashing in his skull. He didn't have much choice though. It was either trust Jimaelhae or die.

Jimaelhae though had no interest in killing Nathan. After the brutes had turned on his people he realized that everything he had been told was a lie. He had decided to try and repay the humans for all the blood he had spilled. Thinking about his decision however, he realized he may have to fight his own brethren.

Not everyone can forsake the path that was chosen for them, so easily.

* * *

>Barkarus saw the hastily erected tents, and the blazing fires. He made his way towards them, determination lengthening his stride. Here he would stake his claim as chieftain. Undoubtedly another brute would challenge him for the position. Barkarus would merely kill the challenger, and his claim would be fortified.<p><p>

When Barkarus entered the brute encampment, the jumble of brutes, jackals and drones stared at him, the blood matting his fur, and the war hammer clutched in his paw. Barkarus strode through the throngs to the center of the camp. Once there he raised his arms, holding the war hammer above him.

"Tartarus has fallen. I, Barkarus, claim the right as wielder of the

hammer to be the next chieftain of the brutes," Barkarus yelled out, his voice echoed across the silent camp.

"What makes you think you are worthy?" a voice called out. Barkarus turned to see a particularly large brute emerging from the crowd. Barkarus knew him, his name was Karlirous. He believed himself to be the best warrior in the clan, if he was beaten then the other brutes would bend their knees.

"You challenge my right?" Barkarus asked knowing full well the answer.

"I do," Karlirous barked, folding his meaty arms across his chest. Barkarus snorted, and set the war hammer down. He bared his fangs, and charged. Karlirous charged as well, barreling towards the smaller brute.

The camp watched, entranced. The winner of this conflict would be their leader they knew. The future of the brutes and ultimately the covenant weighed upon this fight.

The two had almost collided. At the last second Barkarus dropped lower and shifted just a bit. Karlirous realized what was going to happen, and he was powerless to stop it. Barkarus smashed all his weight into the larger brute's knee. The snap that ensued could be heard by everyone, followed by the bellowing scream of pain and rage. Karlirous fell to the ground, and tried to get back to his feet but he couldn't manage it.

Barkarus snarled again, and leapt upon the fallen Brute's back, and began pummeling his skull as hard as he could. Karlirous flailed his arms, trying to get Barkarus off of him, but it was to no avail.

Fist after fist collided with bone, until finally it began to crack. Barkarus placed his hands on the fallen brute's head, and with all his strength pulled. Another snap echoed across the camp, this time however, it was from the neck. Barkarus continued to pull, tearing flesh. Finally the head came free.

Barkarus stood holding the battered head above him. He let out a mighty growl, and raised his other arm in victory.

There was nothing but silence. Then from the front a small chant started. It quickly grew, spreading amongst the crowd.

"Barkarus, Barkarus, Barkarus," they all chanted.

Barkarus roared, letting the blood from his kill drip down across his face. He was chieftain, and soon Halo would again belong to the covenant.

* * *

>The edge of the jungle was dark, and silent. According to stories, the first Halo was covered in woods, this one however was much more tropical. It was all jungle.<p><p>

In the darkness beneath the trees a single marine leaned against a large tree. She was looking at two small oval pieces of metal in her

hand.

CORPORAL LINDSAY FENRIS B33194637 0+ both read. Rank, name, service number, and blood type. Fenris sighed and slipped her dog tags back on. She reached into one of her pockets, and pulled a small container from it. She took the lid off, held out one hand and shook two pills from the container. She popped both in her mouth and swallowed, before taking a swig from her canteen.

She put the lid back on the bottle before looking at it. She didn't have many left. She would have to get some more somehow. Where she didn't know. Her squad had been ambushed by the flood and the survivors had all fled in different directions. She didn't know where anyone was now. She was alone, low on supplies, and lost.

Her hand went to her face to wipe away her sergeant's blood. It had splattered across her after one of the combat forms took his head off. Still, his fate was better than Harris's.

A growl emanated from the jungle. Fenris picked up the shotgun laying beside her and aimed it towards the jungle. Nothing came out, but she frowned nonetheless. She stood, and picked up the battle rifle laying on the ground on the other side of her. It was her issued service rifle, and had a strap on it. She slipped it over her shoulder now.

There was no point in sitting around and waiting to die. She might as well try and get somewhere. Back was a battlefield full of corpses, mostly elites. Forward was a dark unexplored jungle. She decided she might as well explore the unknown. Maybe she could find help.

Maybe she would find a way off this artificial world of death.

* * *

>Nathan grunted with pain as he slipped on his armor. Jimaehae watched the battered sergeant prepare himself to move. Despite himself, the elite felt some respect for the human. He had been operating on limited sleep, had survived a jungle infested with the parasite, and was still alive after the slash across his chest.<p><p>

"Where are we headed?" Nathan asked.

"Out of this jungle. Our chances for survival will be much higher if the flood can't ambush us from above," Jimaehae responded.

Nathan let out a small humorless laugh at that, before picking up one of the spare carbines. He turned the weapon over in his hands. He was unused to it, but he had been trained with it. The humans were not stupid, they knew how to adapt.

Nathan turned to look at his new comrade. It felt awkward for him. He was putting his life in the hands of the enemy. An enemy that had been on a genocidal campaign against his species for years. He didn't trust Jimaehae, but he didn't have much of a choice.

He would have to put away his hatred so he could live.

"Let's go," Nathan said. The elite nodded, and the two started into

the jungle. Jimaelhae went first, while Nathan followed closely behind watching the treetops.

Nathan sighed inwardly. Jimaelhae had begun to trust him, had forsaken everything that he had been told. Nathan wondered if both species could take a lesson from this one warrior.

If one man can find redemption upon the field of battle, maybe all hope was not lost.

3. Jungle Gun Run

Chapter 2: Jungle Gun Run

Now that the glow of the campfire had been left behind, Nathan could again feel the cold begin to creep into him through his wet fatigues. The humidity of the jungle was not going to help dry him off, and if he didn't get his wound looked after soon it could get infected, and possibly be lethal.

His eyes never stayed on one place for even a second. The flood were not the ones to sit and wait in ambush, they would be moving in the trees, so he didn't need to concentrate to see them. The human eyes could detect movement easily.

He and Jimaelhae walked quickly through the undergrowth, but years of experience with rough terrain had caused them to become surefooted when other would have fallen on their face.

A growl sounded from off to their side. Both Jimaelhae and Nathan spun, weapons following their movements. Both of them saw the shadowy shape jump up into the trees. Nathan quickly looked behind him, seeing another shape jump high. Jimaelhae snarled, and started forward, a little quicker than before.

"Fuck that! Run damnit!" Nathan yelled firing two shots into the trees above.

The elite knew that Nathan knew much more about fighting the flood than himself. With that in mind he broke into a run with Nathan right behind. Jimaelhae was impressed that the marine was able to keep up, under normal circumstances it would have been difficult, but with that wound across his chest and lack of sleep it was unbelievable.

A combat form fell from the trees in front of the two. Jimaelhae felt a low growl escape his own mouth even as the creature brought a clawed hand back ready to strike. Jimaelhae drove his shoulder into the creature's chest, driving it to the ground. Nathan followed up the hit by driving a foot through the infected ribcage and crushing the controller within the ex-elite's chest.

A infected marine leapt from the woods, a pistol firing wildly into the air. Nathan fired a few shots into the thing's chest putting it down quickly. The two soldiers tore through the jungle, with just a few traces of light leaking down from the treetops.

"How do we know where to go?" Nathan asked, hoping the alien would know Halo better than himself.

"We don't," Jimaehae answered without stopping.

The growls were growing in volume behind them, and both could tell that the flood were gathering to kill them.

* * *

>Barkarus looked down at the glistening water. It was so clear, but the reflection of the sun above reflected off the glossy surface. He could see himself, could feel a surge of pride at the Mohawk that now adorned his head. Another obvious symbol of the chieftain.<p><p>

The wounds across his body were healing well now, and he was ready to lead his army across Halo, and cleanse it of the filth that had collected on the sacred ring.

Another brute came up beside Barkarus. He was called Cerberus, and was Barkarus's right hand. His face was covered in vicious scars, and there were patches of fur missing from his hide. He was a veteran of war, but he had no desire to lead the clan, which was why Barkarus trusted him.

"The Jackals have found the Arbiter. He does not have a large group with him, just ten elites and those two humans," Cerberus reported, looking across the water, as if searching for prey.

"Take however many you need, and crush them," Barkarus ordered.

"The fate of the Arbiter?" Cerberus asked still looking across the water.

"Though I would like him returned to me alive, dead is sufficient," Barkarus ordered.

Cerberus's face twisted in the smile of his species. He turned and left to do what was asked of him. Barkarus knew that the Arbiter would soon no longer need to trouble his thoughts.

* * *

>Fenris heard the far off growls of the Flood, and the sounds of gunfire. There could be some survivors, and they would be her only way out of this place. She took off at a run, snapping branches and jumping over shrubs in her rush.<p><p>

A single combat form leapt in front of her, and Fenris fired her shotgun without thinking twice. Pieces of yellowish meat flew in all directions, and she ran past the mess, determined to get to the battle.

Above her she saw more Flood. They were hunting her now. Her face twisted into a scowl. This prey was not defenseless, far from it.

* * *

>Nathan fired the last shot from his carbine. The empty pod ejected from the weapon. Nathan swung his head to the side surprised by the ejection.<p><p>

"Forgot about that," he muttered as he slipped a full pod into the

alien weapon.

Jimaelhae was just a few feet ahead firing a steady barrage into the foliage. Many of the combat forms were armed, and so return fire was blazing through the jungle. A plasma bolt just missed Nathan's head. He turned and fired three shots at the creature. It fell back dead.

One of the flood landed behind Jimaelhae, and was about to impale the warrior with a tentacle. Nathan raised his weapon and fired a shot taking the limb off. Jimaelhae turned and slammed the butt of his carbine into the creature's chest, causing the cavity to collapse and killing the abomination.

The elite nodded a quick thanks to Nathan before turning back to the oncoming flood.

Nathan looked around, the flood were coming in from all directions. There were so many, too many.

"Fuck you bastards," Nathan screamed defiantly at the oncoming horde. He fired his weapon wildly hitting some of the flood warriors, but most missed their target.

"Calm down human. Panic will get us no where," Jimaelhae called from his position.

Nathan knew that his partner was right. He reloaded his weapon quickly but calmly. He had survived worse than this, so he could fight through this. He may deserve to die, but he still had a job to do. He had to do everything in his power to fight back the flood, and whatever remained of the covenant.

The loud boom of a shotgun jerked Nathan from his thoughts that he could slip into when fighting mindlessly. He looked through the dim jungle, seeing another group of flood coming towards him and Jimaelhae. However on the ground was the outline of a marine, they were firing a shotgun at whatever approached them.

"Over here," Nathan called, and the marine started running even harder.

The marine came out from a bush just in front of Nathan. She spun and fired her shotgun tearing a flood warrior in half. She was covered in blood, both yellow and red. Her black hair was tied back in a French braid, and she had a battle rifle strapped across her back.

"Sir," she said upon seeing his rank on his sleeve.

"We'll have time for formalities later Corporal," Nathan replied, firing a few shots into the foliage.

The new arrival nodded, and fired a shot above her at a combat form leaping down in an attempt to crush the pair of them. The blast from the shotgun tore through the creature. What remained of its corpse landed on the ground between the two with a dull thud, and blood splashed over the pair.

* * *

>After a few minutes the flood stopped their attack. For a good few hundred meters there was a trail of broken branches, trampled foliage and blood. Now the three soldiers were resting against a tree.<p><p>

After the introductions, Nathan explained to Fenris about Jimaelhae. About how the covenant had split into two, brutes versus elites.

"You realize that an alliance between humans and elites will be impossible. The hatred is too strong," Fenris pointed out, wiping the blood from her shotgun.

"I am," Jimaelhae responded.

"An alliance may be, but a cease to hostilities may not be," Nathan tried.

"Possible, but doubtful," Fenris said, looking back at their trail.

"Our only hope to keep our two species from killing each other is the arbiter. I've already heard stories that he was working together with some humans," Jimaelhae explained.

"Where do we find him?" Nathan asked.

"I do not know," Jimaelhae responded, head just a little.

"Well, if your not sure we better start looking. Halo is quite big," Fenris said, standing and holding her shotgun over her shoulder.

"We should see if we can find some proper medical supplies as well," Nathan put in, looking down at his wound. Through the crack in the armor all three could see fresh blood staining the bandage. The wound had begun bleeding again through the fighting.

"If that doesn't get looked after soon, you could die," Fenris told the sergeant.

"I know, so we should get going. Time is not on our side," Nathan said, looking up at the sky, as if searching for an answer.

None came.

4. Death of Peace

****Chapter 3: Death of Peace****

The blazing sun high in the sky felt wonderful. Nathan could feel the warmth spread through him as he stepped outside the jungle. Now he didn't have to worry about freezing to death.

Fenris had slipped her battle rifle into her hands, and slung her shotgun. Now that they were in the open, it was the much better weapon. She was still on full alert, her eyes darting back and forth, her ears listening for any sound that seemed out of place.

Jimaelhae looked around, scanning the ruins in the distance, the

cliffs, and the plain that they had found themselves on. He didn't see anything that would tell him the location of anyone.

"I am still uncertain on how to proceed," Jimaehae stated, glancing at the two humans accompanying him.

"I have no idea either," Nathan said.

Fenris raised her head slightly, and her eyes narrowed as the wind blew into her face. She looked at the ruins, then smiled slightly.

"There are some elites at the ruins ahead," she said, then started towards them.

"How do you know that?" Jimaehae demanded.

"No offense, but your species stink," Fenris responded.

"There is something that she is not telling us, it would be a good idea to keep an eye on her," Jimaehae said quietly, looking at Nathan. Nathan nodded, watching as Fenris pulled a small container out of her pocket, and pop something into her mouth. He wondered what kind of drug it was, he decided to ask her in private.

"Good idea," Nathan agreed with the alien, and the two started following the mysterious marine that had joined them.

* * *

>Cerberus stared down at the group of elites being led through the valley by the Arbiter. The warrior chosen by the prophets seemed troubled by something, but that didn't concern Cerberus. All that concerned the brute warrior was that the elite was alive.<p><p>

He dropped from the tree he had been in and signaled to another brute that the attack was to begin. Though Cerberus had only seen one of the humans, the female naval officer, they were not the priority. The Arbiter and his elites were however, and they were all here.

A brute on the other side of the valley let out a vicious roar, and charged down the slope at the elites, followed by six brutes.

"Ambush," the Arbiter yelled out, igniting a plasma sword. Only one other elite, dressed in white armor with a large headdress had such a weapon. The others were armed with either plasma rifles or carbines. The human was armed with dual SMGs.

Cerberus roared as well, and began his own charge down his side of the slope, leading six of his own warriors. Some elites turned, as well as the human. Cerberus was the only one with a brute shot, which he aimed into the center of the elites and fired his four shots.

Four small explosions sent dirt flying. Only one elite was killed by the explosions, arm and head torn apart. Two others were seriously wounded however, one of which had lost a leg, and was on the ground firing dual plasma rifles up at the charging brutes.

The brutes began to fire their own plasma rifles, the red bolts flying back at the source of the blue. The Arbiter was yelling out words of encouragement to his entourage, even as one fell beside him, a smoldering hole in it's chest.

A bolt from a carbine went clean through a brute's head just beside Cerberus. The warrior fell to the ground and rolled tripping his fellow warriors. Cerberus roared ever louder, charging down as fast as he could, his empty brute shot held high so the sun gleamed off the blade.

The surviving brutes were then amongst the elites. The white elite jumped through the air, slashing down with his blade. A brute's skull was split open. Smoke billowed from the charred wound as brains spilled onto the ground. The elite landed and Cerberus took its head off with a single sweep of his brute shot.

The human was firing her SMGs into another brute, the bullets tearing through the warrior's hide, splattering blood over the other fighters behind him. When her weapons were dry she started to reload, but Cerberus was right there. A single fist collided with her chest. He felt her ribs snap and she gasped for breath.

Blood began to froth at her mouth and Cerberus knew he had punctured a lung, and her spine judging by how her lower body went limp. The human officer fell to the ground trying to gulp down air. The legless elite was crushed beneath the foot of another brute, who was instantly cut down by the Arbiter's sword.

The Arbiter leapt into the air, killing a brute in the same fashion as the other swordsman, but upon the Arbiter's landing he thrust a sword into another brute's chest, melting the heart and killing it instantly.

Cerberus swung his brute shot, but the Arbiter saw it and dodged out of the way, right into another brute, he couldn't move far enough.

An intense pain flared from his elbow as Cerberus's blade had taken his arm off at the elbow. He grunted just as the brute commander punched him in the face sending the Arbiter into darkness.

The elites were all dead, their blood staining the ground. Cerberus threw the unconscious Arbiter over his shoulder, and let out a laugh.

"Leave the dead, the wounded can limp back themselves," he commanded.

The brutes then left the battlefield behind. Leaving the dead untouched.

* * *

>Captain Miranda Keyes lay on her back, unable to breath, feeling leaving her body. Blood ran freely from her mouth, she was drowning in her own life fluids. Movement at the top of the hill caught her attention. Had Sgt. Johnston returned.<p><p>

It was a single infection form, making its way down the slope. Her

eyes went wide with fear, and she tried to scream, but all that came out was a strange gurgle.

The infection form crawled onto her chest and began to cut through her uniform, burrowing through her breast to latch itself to her spine. She felt cold tendrils spreading through her body, wrapping around her heart, and climbing into her head.

She had met the same fate as her father, she was becoming one with the flood.

* * *

>"Thought I would never see sky wide open ever again," Nathan thought aloud. The other two glanced at him. They knew what he had been through, he needed rest. It was amazing really that he had been able to push himself as hard as he had been.<p><p>

Fenris glanced over at the cliffs to their right.

"What is it?" Jimaehae asked, noticing her glance. Nathan blinked coming back to reality.

"Nothing," Fenris replied, though the elite knew that she was lying.

Fenris looked over at Nathan, and stopped walking. Jimaehae did a split second afterwards, but Nathan wandered a few steps past them before realizing that they had stopped.

"What?" he asked.

"We're resting here. We can't have you fighting half-assed. Especially when there is only three of us," Fenris said.

"Are you sure we're safe out here?" Jimaehae asked.

"No. Me and you will take shifts keeping watch. The sergeant needs rest or he'll pass out on us," Fenris said.

"Agreed," Jimaehae said.

When they looked over to see if Nathan approved, he was already on his back in the grass, sleeping soundly. Fenris raised an eyebrow then glanced up at Jimaehae.

"I'll take first watch, allow you to rest, then I shall wake you," Jimaehae stated.

"How long?"

"Two hours each."

"Sounds good," Fenris finished, and she laid herself in the grass. She looked over at the ruins, then at Jimaehae sitting cross legged. She didn't know why she trusted him, but her gut told her to, and her gut was what had kept her alive all these years.

As she closed her eyes and slipped into the realm of sleep she wondered if her ghosts would come back to her.

As Fenris slept Jimaelhae looked over his two new comrades. They had impressed him in the fight back in the jungle. Everything he thought he had been told wasn't entirely true. The humans were honorable, courageous and loyal to their species.

For the most part anyway, according to Nathan's story about Wesley, the ONI agent that had killed two members of his platoon back in the jungle.

Jimaelhae knew what it felt like to be betrayed. His entire species had been painted as heretics, and now the covenant had split. He knew that his people would never recover, many would not be able to give up their faith, would not be able to put aside their hatred of the humans.

Jimaelhae was looking at the end of a proud line of warriors, unless he could do something about it. The Arbiter was his last hope, he had to find the fabled warrior.

Again Jimaelhae looked over the two sleeping marines. How had they put aside their hatred of him? How could they trust him? Especially with all the blood on his hands.

* * *

>Cerberus threw the Arbiter down onto the ground in front of the brute chieftain. Barkarus growled in approval, the elite was still alive, though weak from blood loss. He reached down and grabbed the back of the Arbiter's head and yanked back so the two were staring in each other's faces.<p><p>

"So this is the great Arbiter which slew Tartarus. I'm unimpressed," Barkarus snarled.

"You are a coward. If you want me to beg, you'll be greatly disappointed," the Arbiter spat back in reply.

Barkarus laughed, and pointed at a large wooden pole set up in the center of the brute camp.

"I would like you to beg, but I know your pride. I will just be satisfied knowing you will die in pain," Barkarus said with a laugh, and he threw the Arbiter's face down into the dirt. Barkarus stood and turned to Cerberus.

"Do it," he ordered.

Two brutes came forth and stripped the Arbiter of his armor, throwing it unceremoniously in a pile at the base of the pole. When they were done Cerberus grabbed the Arbiter and again threw him over his shoulder. He climbed the pole holding two spikes in his mouth.

When at the top he wrapped his legs around the pole to steady himself, held the Arbiter with one hand, and one spike with the other. He drove the spike through both the Arbiter's wrists into the pole.

The elite winced slightly, but he did not scream. He couldn't bring himself to. Cerberus climbed down a bit, and drove the other spike

through both the Arbiter's shin, fastening him to the pole. Again the warrior did wince, but there was no scream, no begging.

Cerberus climbed down the pole, and looked up at the Arbiter. So did Barkarus, and the chieftain saw the pain in the elite's eyes.

"Like I said, you will die in pain, and that is sufficient for me," Barkarus said, and laughed. He then walked away from the pole.

He knew he had done more than just kill an elite warrior. He had killed the only chance for peace between the humans and elites. Now both would fall before the might of the covenant.

5. Realm of Dreams

****_Author's Note:_**** Thanks for reading, I hope everyone is enjoying this so far. I must point out however that yes, I did have to kill off the Arbiter. Johnson will be making an appearance, and there may be a grunt character, depending on how the story swings. Please note that this fic may turn out much different from what it may seem now, some weird stuff is going to happen. Enjoy!

****Chapter 4: Realm of Dreams****

"You were going to leave me to die sergeant," Hank spat.

His head was laying in the mud, a few feet from his mutilated torso, exposed ribs gleaming white. The marine's limbs were scattered around the clearing, blood still oozing from the wounds.

"So when that creature killed me did you feel innocent? It's not like you killed me, or even leave me behind. The flood did it for you," Hank accused.

Amy's body parts were also strewn about the mud, but she remained silent, a chunk of her head with the eyeball still in its socket staring at him. Sara was leaning against a tree, the front of her throat almost gone. Blood had run down over her armor and was even splashed up on her face. She couldn't speak, but her gaze cut deep into Nathan as well as any knife.

Jim stood with his arms crossed. His head was still bent at an unnatural angle, and there was a split down the center of his skull. Blood ran down across the side of his face leaning towards the ground.

"Your said on the Mombassa Bridge that you would let no harm come to us. Looks like you failed sir. Or did you even care? Were you too busy trying to save you own ass?" Jim hissed.

Mike was lying on his back, because his legs had been torn away. His intestines had fallen out into the mud, scorched black from the heat of the plasma grenade that had killed him.

"Should have known Wesley would have pulled something like that. You're the sergeant, why didn't you take responsibility?" he said in his calm voice causing blood to run from his mouth.

Gary was sitting against a smashed pelican dropship, a piece of metal

jutting from his neck. The battered and twisted pilots were on either side of him. They stared with dead eyes that were still filled with accusation.

Danny was crouching atop the pelican, his body disfigured by the parasite entwined throughout him, but his face remained normal, from before the infestation.

"Why weren't you watching, why did you let them come for me?" he asked.

In the trees above Kevin hung from a rope, his open eyes staring at his father. Shelly and Wesley stood beneath the swinging corpse and stared at him with eyes full of hatred.

"How could you abandon me, just leave me to fend for myself?" Shelly screamed.

"You have blood on your hands. You've killed your fellow man. Blood does not wash away as easily as you might hope it does sergeant," Wesley said with a twisted smile, and gesturing over to Novikov standing with a large hole through his head, brains falling out to the ground, and the rioters with assault rifle rounds peppered across their bodies.

"I'm sorry!" Nathan yelled as loud as he could, falling to his knees, and holding both sides of his head.

"You've damned us all! Condemned us!" they all shouted at once.

"I tried, I tried as hard as I could," Nathan screamed, looking up at them again with tears running from his eyes.

"A warrior does not let his past cloud his future," a new voice said.

Nathan looked over his shoulder to see two new figures. Corporal Lindsay Fenris and Jimaelhae stood there, beyond the trees.

"No one is free of sin Nathan, but all one can do is strive forward and save those that remain," Fenris said, slipping a shell into her shotgun. Her hair wasn't bound, it was let loose. It came down to her shoulders and waved in the wind, almost like a freed animal. Nathan looked into her eyes, and saw spirit there.

"Do not forget the past, but do not let it consume you," Jimaelhae said.

Nathan looked at the elite, and then stood. He felt new energy within him. He looked behind him and saw his old platoon, their wounds gone. A young Kevin was kneeling in front of them, petting Jasper on the head.

"Go sir. We have fallen, but honor our deaths do not grieve us," Amy said.

"You still have a duty to perform, though ours are done," Hank said with a smile.

The others just nodded. Nathan turned, and walked out of the jungle.

Fenris and Jimaelhae greeted him, and the three started off across the plains. In the distance Nathan saw that the land cut away. Beyond it was the earth, wreathed in flame.

Behind the globe a mass of tentacles began to encroach upon the burning planet. Nathan stared at it confused. Then he heard a voice, it was the same low gravely voice that the Avatar had used.

"We come for you reclamer, and your people will become one with the Flood," it said.

* * *

>The wolf howled in the darkness of the forest, stalking her prey. She could smell the fear, the sweat of the deer she hunted. The moon was full, and shone through the thick trees in places, lighting the path.<p><p>

The predator ran through the brush, ignoring the twigs that snapped as she progressed at an alarming speed. She jumped from the brush, and latched her teeth on the deer's neck. She could feel warm blood splash across her muzzle as she tore flesh away from the deer, feeling the animal's spirit lift away.

"Dear sister we are unique," a voice said in the darkness.

"We are," Lindsay responded, sitting in a tree watching the wolf feed. Her sister Loraine was sitting in a pile of leaves, the white material of her dress spreading around her like a pool.

"You feel it within, soon not even your pills will control what you really are," Loraine said.

"I can't embrace the truth just yet sister. As mother said, there is a time and place for everything," Lindsay responded.

"That time approaches fast. Soon the time will come for the human race to emerge from the darkness it had started in, and you must fight in the greatest war ever waged in the universe," Loraine said again.

The wolf took another bite of her meal. Lindsay still sat in the tree watching as her sister stood and left the clearing. Then the moon went dark.

* * *

>Fenris opened her eyes as soon as Jimaelhae stepped near her. Her shotgun was pointed at his chest, finger resting on the trigger.<p><p>

"Good instincts human," Jimaelhae observed.

"Thanks," Fenris said, sitting up and lowering the shotgun.

"The night is dull, I should sleep undisturbed," the elite said, before laying himself on the grass, and falling asleep himself. Fenris sighed, only a few hours.

* * *

>Barkarus looked up at the Arbiter's corpse, suspended on the pole, his blood running down the grain of the wood. He was one enemy, the human officer was also dead. Now all that remained was the demon and that human marine the others called Johnson.<p><p>

It would be no matter, except for the feeling in his gut that warned him a much more dangerous enemy was lurking much closer then either Johnson or the demon. He did not know from where this feeling came, but he was not going to ignore it. Tartarus had died for ignoring his gut and following blindly the prophets.

Barkarus would not make the same mistake. He snarled and turned back towards his tent.

* * *

>Fenris woke Jimaelhae as easily as he had woken her.<p><p>

"Good instincts," she told him with a slight smile. He nodded, and stood. Fenris then went over to the sergeant, who hadn't moved at all in his sleep. She put her hand on his shoulder and shook gently to wake him. It was then she noticed that Nathan was covered in sweat.

Nathan awoke from the shaking, and looked up at Fenris, squinting in the bright light of the sun. It was never night on Halo, which was quite annoying.

"You okay sir?" Fenris asked him.

"Yeah, I'll be fine," he said with a slight smile. He stood and picked up his carbine. Fenris looked at him, concern written across her features.

"He'll be fine now, he has faced his demons," Jimaelhae said behind Fenris. She looked over her shoulder to see the elite looking down at her.

"Dreams hold more answers than anyone realizes," she said, remembering something her mother once told her.

"Yes, but for now we must seek what answers we can at those ruins," Jimaelhae said. Fenris nodded and got to her feet, slinging the shotgun and picking up her battle rifle. The three then set out for the ruins ago, much more rested then just a few short hours ago.

What lay ahead though would test their strength and courage much more than what lay behind them.

6. The Ruins

**Author's Note:** Alright next chapter. And if you want to know what Fenris is read on, I'm not going to give it away so fast. Hope you all enjoy

Chapter 5: The Ruins

Fenris was taking point as the three silently came closer to the ruins. The grass was getting longer, and there were chunks of old building laying around. The ancient structures were just in front of a cliff, so the ruins were cast in shadows.

"I don't see anybody, are you sure there are elites here?" Nathan whispered.

"They are here," Jimaelhae said, looking straight ahead. Nathan looked again, and saw a blue elite standing inside the ruins, just behind a broken wall. He looked calm, he didn't suspect anything.

"They don't know we're here," Nathan said, Fenris stopped and looked behind them.

"Yes they do. They are stalking us," she said.

"How can you know that?" Jimaelhae quietly asked her.

"It doesn't matter right now, what are we going to do about it?" Fenris said, pushing the question back onto the larger elite.

"Walk into plain sight. It is the best plan for our intentions," Jimaelhae answered.

"If I get shot, I'm going to be pissed," Nathan said, standing and leading the three to the ruins.

They walked in peace for a few meters before they heard rustling in the grass on either side of them. Though Jimaelhae and Nathan were startled, Fenris had known they were there long ago. She had heard them, had smelt them. Looking to either side, Nathan noticed the blurs. They uncloaked, revealing six elites, all with weapons trained on the trio.

Fenris bit her bottom lip barely registering the events around her; she needed some of her pills, but she was running really low and had to conserve them. She was pushing it.

"Drop your weapons," an elite in white commanded.

The three did so, though Fenris and Nathan were not very comfortable doing so. The white elite stepped forward, and made a small laugh.

"Jimaelhae. I did not expect you to show your face around here. Especially accompanied by two humans," he said, spitting out Jimaelhae's name as if in disgust.

"Vartainee, I did not expect you to still be living," Jimaelhae answered, slight anger entering his voice.

Nathan and Fenris exchanged glances, both mouthing 'shit' to each other. They knew this was going to get ugly.

"It would seem that warriors worthy of being on this sacred ring are mostly dead. I am not with them just yet. You however do not deserve to be here, you are not even a true warrior," Vartainee said harshly, stepping closer to the other elite and staring him in the

eyes.

Strangely enough Jimaelhae let out a small laugh, and he matched Vartainee's stare evenly.

"I may not have been handed my honor true enough. I earned it. Did you?" Jimaelhae replied.

The other elites glanced at each other, shocked that someone, especially a low born, would talk to a Vartainee with such disrespect. Nathan and Fenris looked at the alien warriors around them, all holding weapons of some form. Fenris especially noted the elite holding dual needlers; she remembered the damage those pink barbs could do to someone. She absent-mindedly put a hand on her right shoulder.

"I have, on countless occasions. Never doubt me," Vartainee said, and then his eyes glanced over the two humans standing behind Jimaelhae, as if noticing them for the first time. His eyes narrowed slightly.

"The brute's betrayal was not enough, a Sanghelli warrior had to turn on us as well. Take them," Vartainee commanded.

"Fuck," Fenris yelled as the elites ran in. Jimaelhae screamed out in rage and threw a punch at Vartainee's face, but the older elite easily blocked the attack and hit Jimaelhae in the neck with his elbow. The lowborn elite fell to the ground unconscious.

Nathan was punched in the chest. He gasped in pain, feeling his wound reopen yet again and fresh blood immediately start to run out from under his bandages.

Three elites came for Fenris. She saw her two comrades go down, and felt anger rise up in her gut. She hadn't had her pills.

The first elite threw a punch at her face, but she ducked and drove her shoulder into the alien's gut. She heard him let out a gasp as all the air flew from his lungs. She turned and drove a fist into the second elite's neck, and he fell to the ground much like Jimaelhae. She turned again, in time to catch an armored forearm to the face which threw her back a few feet.

She landed on her back, blood flowing from her broken nose in a steady stream. She looked up at the elite coming towards her, his hand reaching down for her.

"Mother fucker," she managed to say before falling unconscious.

* * *

>"Pack it all up you dogs. We move," Barkarus roared above the noise of the camp. The brutes and jackals responded immediately, putting out fires, and packing up the tents.<p><p>

The time had come for the Covenant to take back the sacred ring.

"What's the first objective?" Cerberus asked coming up beside the chieftain.

"We're splitting into two groups. There is a human held structure to the north. I'll lead the majority of the troops there; the humans are proving to be a considerable thorn, more so than the elites. For you though, there are some ruins to the west, just past the valley where you attacked the Arbiter. It is held by a small group of elites. Kill them all," Barkarus said.

Cerberus snorted with approval. He pulled a large axe off his shoulder. He was tired of the brute shot, death from a distance was not as fun. He preferred the feeling of cold metal swathing through warm flesh.

"It will be done," Cerberus told the chieftain, then walked off, rubbing the metal shaft of his axe.

Barkarus watched Cerberus go. That was one warrior he was thankful of being on the same side with. He was also afraid to be on the same battlefield as him. That brute would be difficult to take down, maybe more so than even Tartarus.

Cerberus gathered those brutes he thought to be the most bloodthirsty, while Barkarus prepared the rest of the troops.

"Tomorrow, we feast on our fallen foes," Cerberus said to the brutes following him.

They raised their own axes into the air, and as one they let out a roar of bloodlust. They ran out of the camp chanting for blood the entire way.

* * *

>Fenris opened her eyes, and immediately regretted it and clamped them shut. Her head was throbbing, and her nose hurt like hell, and it had seemed so bright.<p><p>

"They gave you a good hit," Nathan said.

Fenris opened her eyes again, it was dark in here, but a single stream of light came in through a hole in the wall. Her head was directly in its path, which was why it had seemed so bright. She crawled away from the stream of light, and her eyes quickly adjusted to the darkness.

They were packed into a small room, which for some reason had bars. It had been a prison once, and was being used as one again. Jimaehae was in the corner, his face hidden by shadows. Nathan was sitting on a bench, arms wrapped around himself to try and keep himself warm in the cold cell.

All three had been stripped of their armor, which left Jimaehae naked. Fenris looked at the elite.

"You okay?" she asked.

"You were right, there will be no peace in the galaxy," Jimaehae said.

Fenris raised her eyebrows. She had already known that, how could he not. She knew that even if the elites had been willing for peace, humans never would. They would want vengeance, they would want blood. Humans really were just as bad as these aliens. No one could see the other side's point of view.

Taking a breath Fenris reached into the pocket of her combat pants, hoping the elites hadn't searched her, or at least hadn't taken them. Her fingers closed around the plastic pill container. She let out another deep breath, and pulled them out.

"What are they for?" he asked.

The look she gave him let him know he was stepping into very personal territory. He looked into her eyes, and his own widened. He had not really noticed them before. They were hazel, flecked with gold. Behind them was something else though, something not entirely human.

"They keep me calm," Fenris answered with slight hesitation, before popping two of the white tablets in her mouth.

Almost instantly her eyes changed from their stunning hazel and gold to a warm brown. Somehow it reminded Nathan of his dog Jasper instead of another human.

"As long they don't affect your performance," Nathan said, though the statement seemed empty somehow.

"They do, but that's the point," Fenris responded, walking over to the bars, and pressing her head against the cold metal to try and calm the throbbing. The combination of cold and her pills was helping with the pain running through her head, much of it stemming from her nose. She reached up and forced the bones and cartilage back into place, causing more blood to flow.

Nathan could hear the crunching even across the cell. He winced slightly. He took a breath.

"Have you heard anything about reclaimers before?" Nathan asked her.

She spun and looked at him.

"How do you know about the reclaimers?" she asked.

"One of the flood spoke to me, he called me a reclaimer," Nathan answered.

Fenris frowned, and slowly turned, again placing her head against the bars.

"I know about them, or should I say I know about us," she said after a few moments of silence. Nathan stood and walked across the cell so he was right beside her. Even Jimaehae looked up.

"Tell me," Nathan said. Fenris bit her bottom lip, before she turned her head slightly, to look up at the sergeant.

"We were created by the forerunners to reclaim the galaxy from their

mistakes. Unfortunately for them and us the forerunners disappeared before they could teach us everything. Now we are on the brink of extinction, and we are supposed to save the universe," Fenris said, a humorless smile crossing her face.

"So humans are the reclaimers," Nathan asked for confirmation.

"Not all of them," Fenris answered.

7. The Attack

****_Author's Note:_**** Okay, I know it's been awhile since I've updated... I have school to blame for that. I hope you all enjoy this chapter, its a little longer than usual, and I'll try to update again soon.

****Chapter 6: The Attack****

The edge of the jungle was dark, and quite save the heavy breathing of a few dozen blood thirsty brutes. They all stared at the ruins ahead, lust for battle filling their minds. Cerberus was keeping them here for a while, letting their rage build up before sending them after the elites.

He would have to time it perfectly, if they were too angry they might turn on each other and not fight properly. If they were at the right level of rage though, they could be unstoppable.

Cerberus gripped his axe tightly, then nodded his head and grunted. As one the brutes let out a deafening roar and charged out of the jungle. Cerberus was in front of the charging line, axe held high so that the sun gleamed off the blade.

Blood would be theirs.

* * *

>While Nathan was absorbing the information that Fenris had told him, the corporal's head shot straight up.<p><p>

"What is it?" Nathan asked, just as the sound of charging brutes reached his ears.

Shouting echoed throughout the ruins as the elites hastened to prepare a defense, they were not prepared for a full out attack. Jimaelhae stood and went to the window. He shook his head as he watched the oncoming brutes with axes raised high, and the scrambling elites grabbing what weapons they could.

"They're afraid, they need help," Fenris said.

"Elites do not know fear," Jimaelhae said.

"I don't give a fuck about your customs or honor right now. I'm telling you your buddies are scared shitless and they will be torn to shreds fighting the brutes as they are now," Fenris said.

"What do you think we should do? In case you haven't noticed, we're stuck in a god damned prison cell," Nathan pointed out.

"Yeah I know, but do you know how old these ruins are?" Fenris said, picking up a fair sized rock.

Jimaelhae and Nathan looked at her in confusion. Fenris simply winked and threw the rock at a wall, which smashed out a few of the rocks in the wall. She walked over and began pulling more rocks away making the hole bigger.

"Why didn't you do that earlier?" Nathan asked

"Because I didn't want to attract attention, now let's go find some equipment, I feel like living through this," Fenris said, crawling through the hole.

Nathan and Jimaelhae followed her. They found themselves in a hallway that actually looked out over the front of the ruins. Jimaelhae looked out through one of the many holes and saw the brutes come into the tall grass that was just in front of the ruins.

A small group of elites tried to ambush the axe wielding brutes. The initial blast of plasma from multiple directions cut down half a dozen brutes, but the tide turned quickly. One brute holding a slightly larger axe made the first strike, easily cleaving an elite in half. Purple blood sprayed across the brute who let out a victorious howl.

Nathan looked over and Fenris and noticed her eyes changing from brown to their original hazel and gold.

"Your pills are wearing off," Nathan observed, wondering if she had more.

"I've noticed," Fenris snarled in reply. Nathan was taken off guard and took a few steps back.

"We should find some weapons," Jimaelhae said, ignoring the transition between Fenris and Nathan.

"Those brutes look like they have some nice weaponry," Fenris said.

"They have axes, why would we want them?" Nathan asked.

"Blades are more reliable than guns. Let's see if we can find our armor" Fenris said, and started walking down the hall. Nathan cracked his neck and started to follow her. Jimaelhae looked out the hole in the wall at the battle that raged below. He was looking for Vartainee, but could not find him. The coward was hiding, he was not fighting.

* * *

>Cerberus cut a bloody swathe through his enemies. The elites were trying to put up a fight, plasma flashed all around the brutes, burning through fur and flesh. Cerberus's bloodthirsty warriors however were not easy to quell, their morale would not falter with some fallen comrades.<p><p>

"You will pay for the blood you have spilled," an elite yelled just

before the blade of Cerberus's axe cleaved through his skull slopping brains onto the elite's shining armor.

"Not just yet," Cerberus said to the corpse, before turning with a swiftness that a creature of his bulk should not have. His used a single hand to swing his blade, lodging his axe into an elite's chest. The elite growled in pain, and Cerberus used the axe to lift him off the ground.

Dark purple blood ran down the shaft of the axe, and over Cerberus's already bloody paws. The brute then swung down with all his might, and the elite was easily cut in two.

"Into the ruins, kill them all," Cerberus roared above the din of battle.

The retreating elites fired streams of plasma into the raging brutes, but it was too little, too late. Cerberus made a small laugh, the battle would be his.

* * *

>The armory was not hard to locate. Fenris and Nathan quickly found their armor and weapons, as it was the only human equipment in the room, and Nathan's chest plate had a large gouge across it.<p><p>

Jimaehae found his old armor and quickly put it on. He gathered some new weapons, a carbine and dual plasma rifles; his weapons of choice. He didn't see a plasma sword, but he had never been very good with them, so he wouldn't have taken one anyway.

"Lets go, and be careful, myâ€| brethren, will use active camouflage in these halls," Jimaelhae said, hesitating.

Fenris replied but hopping out of the armory and firing her shotgun. The blast was followed by the much quieter thud of a corpse hitting the stone floor.

"They still aren't very quiet," Fenris said, shaking her head in mocking sadness, and wiping a spray of blood from her face.

Jimaehae grunted in response, but otherwise made no sign that Fenris had yet again insulted his people.

"Let's just go, I plan on getting the hell out of here," Nathan said after completing the functions test on his battle rifle, then slapping a magazine in place. To Nathan everything had seemed to slip back into place while in the prison, he seemed to have finally woken up from his ordeal back in the jungle. He had a duty to perform, and no brutes were going to stand between him and that duty.

* * *

>Cerberus entered the complex and looked around at the already blood stained walls. He let out a small grunt of satisfaction. He began making his way through the halls alone, listening to the far off sounds of screaming elites and roaring brutes. Then he heard a battle rifle firing, and the blast of a shotgun.<p><p>

The elites were using human weapons? That was odd. Then he came upon the armory. Just outside was a dead elite, the armor on his chest totally destroyed, and the chest almost gone. It could have only been a shotgun blast that could have done this damage. So there were humans in the ruins. Cerberus grunted, this would make the fun that much more enjoyable.

* * *

>With Fenris on point with the shotgun, the three had been able to get through the ruined temple safely. Both Jimaelhae and Nathan had noticed though that Fenris was taking unnecessary risks. Though they had mostly encountered elites so far, they had gone through a few brutes.<p><p>

"Fenris, do you even know which way we're going," Nathan asked.

"Yes, but I'm guessing it's not the way you want to go," she answered with a feral grin.

"We're going to check this room here," Nathan said, pointing at a doorway off to their side.

Fenris nodded, and continued down the hallway as Jimaelhae and Nathan entered the room, weapons at the ready. Inside two elites were piling crates to try and make a barricade for a last stand. They turned as Nathan and Jimaelhae entered, and went for their weapons. Nathan fired first, his bullets struck the elite across the chest, and his shield flared up and sent him stumbling backwards into the crates he and his partner had been piling. He fell over backwards and landed in a heap.

Jimaelhae fired constantly with his carbine into the second elite, and soon enough the shields were gone and the rounds went through his chest and through his heart, killing him instantly. Nathan finished the first elite off with a few well placed shots to the head.

* * *

>Down the hall Fenris turned another corner in time to see a brute splitting an elite's head down the middle with his axe. Fenris raised her shotgun, and squeezed the trigger. It didn't fire. There wasn't even a click of an empty chamber. The brute turned and looked at Fenris just as she checked the weapon. The shell had jammed inside the chamber, and she didn't have time to fix it now.<p><p>

"Piece of crap," she said throwing the weapon away.

The brute let out a mighty roar and charged, expecting the marine before him to go for the battle rifle slung across her back. Instead she growled, and lifted her upper lip, exposing her canine like teeth. The brute stalled for just a second, and in battle, a second can be the difference between life and death.

Fenris ran forward and dug her fingers into the brute's throat. His eyes went wide with shock as he realized what was going to happen just as Fenris snapped her arm back, tearing out a large chunk of the brute's throat. Blood sprayed across her face from the snapped

arteries.

The brute stared at Fenris in surprise, clutching at his ruined throat, feeling his life blood run between his fingers, and down over his chest. Through the dark purple mask across her face, Fenris smiled, and came at him again. The brute tried to scream, but he couldn't do anything as the creature tore into him.

* * *

>After a full check of the room, Nathan and Jimaehae walked down the hall. They found Fenris sitting on the floor with her back against the wall and trying to pry a shell out of her shotgun. They noticed the blood splattered across the walls and her. Then they saw the brute's corpse, the throat torn apart, and the face mauled.<p><p>

"Holy fuck," Nathan said, eyes going wide.

"Yeah, shotgun jammed, I had to do something," Fenris said without looking up from her work. Finally the shell came out, full of dents from the metal rod she was using from her battle rifle cleaning kit stored in the butt of the rifle.

She threw the useless shell away, flipped the safety on, and then proceeded to take her shotgun apart. She let the unfired shells fall out of the weapon. As she looked inside the chamber she shook her head.

"The feeder is broken," she said, and fished inside the pockets of her fatigues until she found a rectangular, black plastic case. She opened it and pulled out her spare shotgun feeder.

"You've been trained to repair your own weapons in battle?" Jimaehae asked.

"Yeah, cause you never know," Nathan said, patting his own pocket, feeling the comfort of his own case, holding spare parts for his battle rifle. The weapon he knew oh so well.

Jimaehae glanced at his own weapon; he wasn't even entirely sure how it worked, much less how to repair it in case it was damaged.

Fenris had replaced the feeder, and quickly reassembled her shotgun. She slipped in the shells she had let out, and slipped in some new ones. She pumped the shotgun, loading a shell into the chamber and ensuring the new feeder was working.

"Alright, let's go," Nathan said.

Fenris stopped for just a moment, and picked up the mutilated brute's axe. She heard someone coming down the hall.

* * *

>Cerberus knew that the battle was drawing to a close. The sounds of fighting were few and far between. He looked in a room and saw two elite corpses, one laying in a pile of crates with its head blown apart, the other face down on the floor, neat green tinged holes through his torso. The humans had been here.<p><p>

He had even seen a few of his own brutes taken down by the humans. He proceeded cautiously both paws gripping his axe tightly. He walked down the hall, chest heaving in bloodlust, and then he saw the blood. It was everywhere, and when he saw the source he screamed out in rage. One of his brutes, torn apart viciously. Was the parasite here then? No they would have claimed his corpse for their own, or were the infection forms not here yet.

There was a noise behind him, so he turned, and saw a single female marine holding a brute axe. He was about to laugh when he noticed that she was covered in dark purple blood. He realized that it hadn't been the parasite to do this to his warriors, it was this marine. This one marine.

Cerberus snarled and charged forward axe raised. She didn't move until he brought the axe down. When he did she moved to the side and smashed him in the side of the head with the ax shaft. Cerberus stumbled, and the marine followed up with a swift kick to his side, but Cerberus swung his arm out wide, hitting her leg and sending her to the ground.

He laughed, suspecting victory his as he got to his feet. He was about to smash her face in with his foot, but the marine rolled out of the way, jumped to her feet, and smashed the blade of her axe into the middle of Cerberus's chest.

He stared down at the axe in between his ribs, then his eyes rolled into the back of his head, and he fell backwards to the floor.

* * *

>Fenris stood above the body of the brute. He had been a true warrior, too bad she didn't know his name. She went down the hall to rendezvous with Nathan and Jimaelhae. Nathan handed her the shotgun and her battle rifle.<p><p>

"Can we go yet?" Nathan asked.

"Yeah," Fenris said.

The three quickly found their way through the ruins to the entrance. They walked through the tall grass until a loud voice called out at them.

"Cowards! Stay and fight," Vartainee yelled from the rooftop of the ruins. Jimaelhae stared up at him, and dropped his carbine and plasma rifles. Vartainee saw him drop the weapons, and so dropped his own.

"So Jimaelhae, a low born, seeks to challenge me? Come then, and find your death," Vartainee bellowed.

Jimaelhae started to climb up to the top of the ruins, just as Fenris's ears picked up something coming. She turned her head to the cliff, in time to see Flood infection forms coming down the cliff.

"Oh shit, we're going to have a problem on our hands," she said, getting Nathan's attention. He saw the flood as well, just cracked his neck.

"Well. I guess we're not done here," he said.

8. The Challenge

****_Author's Note: _****Alright, got an update up quick this time. Hope you all enjoy this one... its starting to get a little farther from the Halo canon now.

****Chapter 7: The Challenge****

In the darkness of the ruins Cerberus slowly opened his eyes. The human had nearly killed him, but hadn't quite finished the job. With pain running through him he grasped the axe, and pulled it out of his chest, luckily it had caught on his sternum and hadn't damaged any vital organs. He ignored the blood flowing from the wound and matting down his fur.

He heard something skittering, and looked behind him in time to see an infection form flying at his face. He swung at it with a meaty paw, and the thing popped on contact with his fist.

So the parasite was here now. They had lots of corpses to add to their army. Cerberus knew that the ruins were no longer safe, he had to get out of here before the flood warriors awoke. He picked up his fallen axe, and his vision swooned.

He took a shaky step, and half fell before he got his hand up against a wall to steady himself. He had lost a lot of blood, and if he was not careful he would die within this place. To survive an axe to the chest only to die of blood loss or the flood just a few minutes after regaining consciousness would not be a good end.

Taking a few breaths, Cerberus tried again, but yet again dizziness overcame him. This time he fell back against the wall and slid to the floor, and let out a scream of rage. This was not how it was supposed to end.

Then he heard a growl from down the hall. Cerberus looked up and saw the mutilated brute with tentacles swarming over his body, and massive claws where his paws used to be. The head was dangling in front of the chest, held in place by a few strands of green flesh. Cerberus put himself on his knees, and gripped his axe.

"Come for me then, kill me if you can," he growled.

The infected Brute came after him and at the last second Cerberus rose bringing his axe up with him, splitting the Flood warrior up the middle, cutting through muscle, bone, and the controller within its chest cavity. Its two halves fell to the floor and yellowish gore was sprayed into the air.

Again Cerberus was overcome by vertigo, and this time he fell on his back. Panting, he clutched his chest, and flipped onto his stomach, then pushed himself to his feet. He would escape this place, no one was going to stop him.

* * *

>Jimaelhae clambered up the walls, and pulled himself up onto the roof of the ruin. There Vartainee was waiting for him, who had removed his headdress.<p><p>

"You have come for your death low born," Vartainee said.

"Everyone has their day to die," Jimaelhae responded, it was something Nathan had told him when they were by the campfire.

Vartainee laughed at that statement, then dropped into an ancient Sangheilli fighting stance. Jimaelhae did the same, and the two cautiously approached each other. Vartainee threw the first punch, hoping to hit Jimaelhae in the face, but the younger elite was able to block the attack and quickly counter with a strike to the chest. Vartainee was pushed a little bit back, but quickly lashed out.

Jimaelhae went to block and counter again, but the initial lash was a decoy and he felt a solid hit against his face, then another strike to the gut doubling him over. A third strike hit him in the head sending him backwards to land on his back. Vartainee stood above Jimaelhae and went to smash his foot down, but the low born elite grabbed the descending foot, and threw the elder elite away from him.

Vartainee landed in a roll, and sprung to his feet, only to catch a fist to the head; Jimaelhae had followed through with his throw and jumped up behind Vartainee. Jimaelhae noticed Vartainee on the edge of the roof, he went to push him off, but the elder was faster at recovering than the younger had anticipated, and Vartainee slammed a shoulder into Jimaelhae's chest, and the two went back towards the centre of the roof.

* * *

>Down on the ground Fenris and Nathan were flicking their gaze between the fight on the rooftop and the entrance to the ruins. If the controllers got into the ruins there were lots of corpses for them to convert into warriors.<p><p>

"We should just go in there and clean them all out," Fenris said, starting forward.

Nathan grabbed her by the shoulder, and she spun around with a snarl. Nathan didn't even flinch, he just let go of her.

"If there are any surviving elites or brutes in there, they can kill of some of the flood for us. Besides, I'd rather fight the parasites out here in the open where they can't get their claws at me as easily," Nathan said calmly.

Fenris looked back at the dark entrance of the ruins, and remembered Harris. How the one flood warrior had torn his stomach out, throwing his intestines across the field. She remembered his screams of agony as blood and other organs fell from the gaping hole in his gut, before the combat form finished him off by sending a tentacle through his right lung. She remembered the bright red froth spilling from his mouth how he had looked at her for mercy, how she had put a burst through his skull, then through the creature that had killed him. By

then the other marines in her squad were already running off, all in separate directions, the flood were hunting them down and killing them one by one. Fenris broke for the woods, keeping her rifle handy, gunning down anything that came for her.

"They can get to you out in the open to, and plus with this long grass, the little bastard infection forms can get to you easier," Fenris countered to Nathan's argument.

The sergeant thought about that for a moment. Then he noticed the grass rustling a few feet ahead of him. He smiled, and went to point it out to Fenris, but she had already heard it, and she was smiling as well.

"Well, I guess they can't sneak very well," she said, picked up a rock, and chucked it at the point of movement in the grass. They both heard a small pop and saw some strands of flesh fly above the grass.

A growl emanated from behind them. Fenris grinned, the Flood had come for them.

* * *

>Barkarus led the attack on the human encampment himself. It did well to show your men that you were no coward. The humans were fighting back well, cutting down many of his troops, but Jackal snipers made short work of the marines outside the central bunker.<p><p>

Barkarus swung his war hammer in a large arc, hitting one unfortunate human in the chest. He could hear the ribs snap even above the sounds of the battle, and watched his body crumple and fly across the battlefield.

"Take the bunker" Barkarus yelled out, charging through the short concrete walls the humans had made to try and make a better defensive position. Of course they were used to fighting elites who would use their ranged weapons more often to win their fights. The brutes were as likely to smash your face in as to shoot you.

The brutes leapt over the short concrete blocks and continued forward at an alarming pace towards the humans. The heavy machine gun turrets they had deployed still cut through the advancing brutes, the large caliber bullets tore out hunks of flesh, and sprayed blood across the ones behind them.

Then out of the corner of his eye, Barkarus saw a brute with tentacles above its head. It was running towards his troops. His eyes went wide as he realized what it was.

"Watch the flanks," he yelled out, but it was too late. The converted brute jumped on a normal one, and tore it to pieces.

The flood were attacking the humans as well, and much of the fire shifted to fend off the oncoming flood. Barkarus saw his chance. In this darkest moment of the battle, instead of banding together against a common foe, he pushed his troops forward.

* * *

>Private James Herald fired his battle rifle as fast as he could, switching between Flood and Covenant targets. His heart skipped a beat as there was a loud snap as the bolt inside his rifle did something, he tilted his rifle to the left out of instinct, saw the ejection port open, and that the bolt had slammed to the back, indicating an empty weapon.<p><p>

He ejected his empty magazine, and pulled a fresh one out of his combat harness, and slammed it in. He hit the bolt catch, which sent the bolt forward again at lightning speed, placing a round in the chamber, and started firing again.

With each squeeze of the trigger he could feel the weapon jump against his shoulder. He didn't think about what he knew was going to happen, he just thought about killing as many of the alien bastards as he possibly could. He started yelling out in defiance as he put a burst through a brute's skull.

He didn't even keep looking to see the effect of his shot, and switched to a flood warrior coming at the bunker. Before he could shoot it, another marine beside him gunned it down.

"Someone get on the turret!" the sergeant yelled, Herald didn't know his name, he was from another unit.

"Mine," the private yelled, throwing the battle rifle over his back, and grabbing hold of the turret. Almost immediately he pressed down on the trigger, sending a constant barrage of bullets into the aliens coming towards the last human position. It could very well be the last human held position on Halo.

His mouth opened in a constant scream, never ending just like the bullets. He watched as covenant and brutes alike were cut down.

There was a scream and a growl behind him. Herald glanced over his shoulder to see a Flood warrior in the base cutting another marine in half. Another soldier armed with a shotgun put short work to the combat form. Again, Herald didn't know either of the two, they were from different units. Everyone had just collected here. It had been some kind of haven for a little while at least.

Herald looked back in front of him, in time to see a brute jumping towards him. Herald turned the machine gun and the bullets cut the brute in half, spilling guts across the ground.

Another brute was coming at him, so he began swiveling the machine gun towards him, when it suddenly stopped firing. Herald quickly checked it, hoping it was just a jam, because he could fix that in a second, but it was out of ammo. His blood went cold, as he felt the brute's hand close over his head and pull him out of the bunker.

"Mother fuc-" he tried yelling before the sound of his skull crushing, cut him off.

* * *

>The brutes had taken the central bunker. The humans were all dead, now they had to hold off the flood.<p><p>

Barkarus rallied his surviving troops, and sent them against the flood. While Jackals provided ranged support, his brutes ran in using fists, brute shots, and plasma rifles to kill off the Flood that still lived.

When the battle was finally over Barkarus took the time to look over the field. It was covered in corpses, from all three sides. He sighed, it had been costly, but surprisingly enough, it was the flood who had won it for him. If they had not attacked when they did, the humans would probably have gunned down all his men. He wondered why that happened the way it did. Was it coincidence, or did something else plan it like that.

* * *

>Fenris fired her shotgun and the Flood warrior was blown in half. While the bottom half went lifeless the top half tried to make its way towards her by dragging itself through the grass. Fenris just used another shell to end its life permanently.<p><p>

Nathan was keeping up a steady stream of fire to make sure that none of the combat forms got close. Their bodies were torn apart by the constant barrage. Surprisingly, very few of them were coming out from the ruins, maybe there were still some survivors in there giving them a rough time. Whatever the case, Nathan didn't want to go in and find out.

"I'm running low on shells, we had better find some more ammo soon," Fenris yelled over to Nathan.

"Agreed," Nathan said as he slammed his second last magazine into the battle rifle. Things were starting to get bad. He didn't want to have to use a carbine again, and he absolutely hated the plasma rifles. He remembered what happened to Jim.

* * *

>Jimaelhae caught another fist with his face. Blood was running freely from his mandibles, but Vartainee was worse off, with blood flowing from a missing eye as well as from a missing mandible.<p><p>

"Why do you not surrender?" Vartainee asked, breathing heavily.

"Because, I will show you that I am a warrior," Jimaelhae said, and when Vartainee went to punch again, Jimaelhae grabbed his arm, and snapped it against itself. The sound of Vartainee's arm breaking was drowned out by his scream of pain. Jimaelhae barreled into him knocking the elder to the ground.

"Now, you will not live to see the great journey," Jimaelhae said, getting behind Vartainee and wrapping his arms around the elder's neck. Then before Vartainee could respond, Jimaelhae snapped his neck. Vartainee's corpse flopped to the ground, and lay still. Jimaelhae pulled out a small knife hidden behind his leg. The Sangheilli kept these for one purpose, and one purpose only. The covenant had tried to destroy this part of the warrior species culture, but they had kept it.

The winner of a challenge claimed not only victory, but the head of the loser. Jimaelhae used the knife to cut off Vartainee's head, and then he raised the gruesome trophy above his head. It had been the first challenge in centuries, and a low born had been the victor. Vartainee's blood ran down Jimaelhae's arm, over his shoulder and down his chest. He let out a roar of victory.

He was Sangheilli, not an elite. He was a warrior of his own will, not a soldier for the prophet's cause. He made a vow to himself right there on the roof, bathing in the blood of his fallen foe, that the Sangheilli would find their warrior roots again, and reclaim their lost honor.

* * *

>In the darkness of the ruins, Cerberus, covered in yellow gore, finally found the exit. His bleeding had finally stopped, and the dizzy spells with it. He emerged into the shadow of the cliff, it was a back entrance. He had escaped with his life, like he said he would. Now he would regain his strength, and get his vengeance.<p><p>

* * *

>On the other side of the ruins, slipping her empty shotgun across her back, and getting her battle rifle ready, Fenris smiled.<p><p>

"So your still alive," she said, catching a familiar scent on the air.

9. Guilty Spark

_Author's Note: _Sorry about the long wait... and yes I am dead, I am writing from beyond the grave. Anywho, I hope you all enjoy, and I hope it was worth the wait. More will be coming! Don't worry!

Chapter 8: Guilty Spark

"The parasite will spread unchecked across the Sacr... Halo, without anyone to stop it," Jimaelhae was explaining, not bothering to wipe away any of the blood that was covering his armor, but mentally attempting to shove all the lies the prophets had fed him to a dark corner of his mind.

"Yeah, we need to find a way off here. We can't fight off all the flood across Halo. Especially with such little ammo" Nathan said. He had slung his battle rifle across his back, and was once again sporting a Covenant carbine.

"Will there be any way to _IN AMBER CLAD_? Or will we have to take something smaller?" Fenris asked, holding her own nearly empty battle rifle against her chest. The shotgun was slung across her back. She wanted to find shells for it, it killed flood good.

"I don't know how many marines are left on this damn ring, so don't be thinking about _IN AMBER CLAD_. It's too big for three people to pilot it, especially when one isn't even human. Besides, do we even

know how to work it? I say we try and find a pelican," Nathan said.

"Are they even big enough to get us back home?" Fenris asked.

Nathan only shrugged in response. He really didn't know, but it was a better idea than just sitting around, waiting to die.

"Well, then lets get moving, I don't want to get caught with my pants down," Fenris said.

Jimaelhae blinked a few times at the expression Fenris used then turned to look towards the forest again.

"That's where the brutes came from," the elite pointed out.

Fenris crouched low to the ground, and examined the dirt and grass. She slowly looked towards the jungle they had come out of, and where Jimaelhae was pointing. She narrowed her eyes slightly, and then started walking towards it.

"Fuck off. I don't want to go through there again," Nathan said, but followed nonetheless. Whatever vices Nathan Little may have had, cowardice was not among them.

As soon as they entered the darkness of the jungle, cutting off the light of the sun, the three were on their guard. They had barely begun their journey through the thick foliage when the angry growls of flood warriors reached their ears.

Fenris rarely took her eyes from the ground, tracking the path the brutes had taken to reach the ruins carefully. Their progress was much speedier this time, but Nathan still felt a cold fear knotting in his gut. He could still see his squad being torn apart one by one. Could still see Wesley firing his pistol into the back of Sara's neck.

"Mother fucker," the marine sergeant muttered under his breath. Jimaelhae threw the man a look, and Fenris glanced over her shoulder, but both quickly brushed it away and the three continued through the dense jungle.

* * *

>Cerberus had secretly made his way away from the human female, who he knew was in front of the temple. No, she wasn't human, she was something more. With a grunt of something that was a cross between approval of a worthy foe and shame at having to sneak away, the brute warrior slowly made his way up the cliff face, taking care not to be seen.<p><p>

He often had to stop on small clefts in the rock to regain his breath. Though his strength was quickly returning he was still weak, and lugging himself and his axe up the cliff face was straining work. He eventually made his way to the top of the cliff. He threw the axe on the top ahead of him before pulling himself up.

He crouched on one knee, a fist planted firmly in the dirt to steady himself. His chest heaved with exertion. Again he found himself admiring the woman who had wounded him. She was unique amongst her

kind, honorable enough to fight in melee combat, and strong enough to win. He didn't understand.

Cerberus knew though, that she would be a danger to the Covenant, maybe as much a danger as the fabled Demon. Maybe more so.

Pushing the thoughts to the back of his mind for the mean time Cerberus took a deep breath, then pushed himself to his feet. He took a few seconds to steady himself, then picked up his axe, and started in the direction of where he knew the covenant encampment would be set up. He had to warn them, he had to recuperate.

After he was recovered he would begin his hunt for that woman. He would kill her.

* * *

>Stealth wasn't a concern as the trio crashed through the underbrush. Fenris didn't even pause as she fired a burst at a flood warrior falling from the tree tops. The bright green bolts of Nathan's carbine shot through the air like streaks of lightning, cutting down flood warriors before they could reach the ground.<p><p>

Fenris was relentless in her path, she seemed to know exactly where she was going. She would suddenly twist around trees, and start off the path in directions that other marines would get lost in, in just a few moments. To think of it, Nathan was lost. He had no idea where he was going, him and Jimaelhae were just concentrating on killing, Fenris was getting them out of this hell.

An infected marine jumped in front of Fenris. Nathan was about to fire when he noticed the recognition that passed across her face. Was this guy from her unit. Before he could fire, Fenris lunged forward and punched her hand through the creature's chest. The body crumpled almost instantly, and Fenris let it drop to the ground.

"Keep moving," she yelled back, and started forward at a fast run. Jimaelhae had no problem keeping up, but Nathan found himself struggling. Damn aliens, and psychotic marines. Why couldn't everything just go back to normal.

For Nathan, nothing had ever been normal since he had stepped through the gates to that boot camp on Reach. No matter what he managed to accomplish here, light-years away from home, nothing could ever go back to normal.

Then suddenly the three burst through the thick foliage into the bright light of the sun. The brightness was the first thing Nathan noticed, the second was the stench.

It was a smell he would never forget, the smell of a battlefield after a battle. He looked across the ground. Everywhere there were corpses, some human, some covenant, some flood. Their carcasses laying under the midday sun, the wind carrying the sickly sweet odor over to the three companions.

"Holy Christ," Nathan muttered, then shook his head.

"Check the dead for ammo," Nathan said, and the other two nodded. Again, Nathan found himself looting the bodies of his comrades, but

the situation required it. He couldn't even stop to give them a decent burial.

"We have to do something about these bodies," Fenris said as she slipped a shell into her shotgun. She was crouched beside the body of a marine who had been torn in two. His bottom half was no where to be seen, and his guts had spilt across the ground.

"We don't have time for any burials," Nathan said, slipping a magazine into one of his magazine pouches.

"I never said anything about burial. I say we burn them," Fenris said holding up a flare she had found.

"The parasite wouldn't be able to use the corpses," Jimaelhae said, picking amongst the covenant corpses.

Nathan realized what they were saying.

"Start a pile on that rubble," Nathan said, slinging his rifle, bending down and grabbing the material of a dead marine's fatigues. He started to drag the body towards the small pile of rubble he had indicated.

Fenris finished loading her weapons, then started ferrying bodies from the edges of the battlefield, all the while warily glancing around to make sure nothing was sneaking up on them.

Jimaelhae dragged the brute corpses towards the growing pile. He often had to get Nathan's help for the larger ones, but steadily the pile grew.

* * *

>Fenris stood at the edge of the carnage. An immense migraine was pounding at her skull from within, and the bones up her legs and forearms ached, pronounced with the occasional stab of pain that ran through her entire body. Slowly, with a twitching hand she reached into her pocket, and pulled out her pills. She emptied the bottle into her hand, and stared incredulously at her palm. Only a single white pill was there.<p><p>

"Fuck right off," she said, but downed the tablet nonetheless. The effects were almost immediate. The migraine dulled slightly, and the pains diminished a little. Not entirely however, and soon enough they would be back, and she'd have nothing to fight them back with.

She dropped the empty bottle in the grass, and then grabbed the corpse laying facedown nearby. As she lifted the body Fenris saw the face. Pvt. Windsor had been in her squad. He had been a nosey little bastard but he was a good soldier, and had even saved Fenris's life before. Fenris looked away for a second, then lifted the corpse. Nearly all her squad was accounted for, and they were all dead. Maybe some were still living, hiding somewhere out in the jungle, but she doubted it.

Fenris threw the corpse over her shoulder and started towards the pile. As she got closer she noticed that Nathan and Jimaelhae and pretty much finished piling the corpses. They had even got a separate pile of weapons. They looked up as Fenris approached.

"Last one?" Nathan asked.

"Yeah, I got the flare in my pocket," Fenris responded. She got to the pile and threw the body on. Cracking her neck she pulled the flare out, and lit it. The bright white flame started up, shooting from the end. Fenris tossed it onto the pile.

Almost immediately brute fur and marine fatigues caught up. The flames quickly made their way across the heap of corpses. Soon enough the smell of burning flesh wafted towards the three still living soldiers.

They all stood still, each reliving their own memories connected with that smell. Nathan remembered Mombassa, the burning warthog with the charred marine at the wheel. Covenant troops were tearing through the old African city, killing everyone in their wake. They were stopped, which was why they were here.

Fenris thought back to when her father got into a car accident. The vehicle had caught fire. When firefighters showed up on the scene they had thought that car was empty. That was, until Fenris's father's skull popped open, splashing brains across the driver's window, and sending a flow of crimson down over what was left of him. She had been on the police force then, and had been there when it happened, keeping traffic away from the scene, all the while shoving her emotions deep inside.

Jimaelhae remembered burning worlds. Billions purged in the all consuming flames that spread across entire planets. All in the name of a false word. How many had he killed in the name of the prophets, all the while they were ready to throw the Sangheili away. To be replaced.

The glow of the fire lit the faces of the three as they stood watching the flames consume the past. Then like a phoenix of ancient myth a silver orb rose above the flames from behind the pyre. A bright blue light shone from its centre.

"The oracle?" Jimaelhae said, dumbstruck. Nathan merely cocked his head to the side in confusion. Fenris stared up at the floating mechanical orb.

"Not quite an oracle," she said.

"I am 343 Guilty Spark, keeper of installation 04, which has been destroyed," the orb said, the blue light flickering to match the syllables of its words. The small A.I. construct floated in the air above the fire for a moment, looking at Fenris.

"You are not the same as the other reclaimers," Guilty Spark said.

Fenris couldn't help but smile. Guilty Spark flew down so he hovered directly in front of Fenris. A small blue light emanating from his 'eye' began to creep over her body. She felt a slight tingling sensation all over.

"Only one?" he asked suddenly. He floated upward slightly. He started flicking his gaze between Fenris and Nathan, almost in

confusion.

"Only one. The human race was not created by the forerunners, and the reclaimers were simply a genetic experiment done on humans," Fenris explained. There were a few seconds of silence.

"Of course you are right. Come quickly we have no time to waste," Guilty Spark said.

"Come where?" Nathan started when suddenly white light surrounded his body. He glanced over at the other two but they were obscured by the same white light.

"God damnit," he muttered, then felt his stomach drop as everything went solid white.

* * *

>In the jungle overlooking the clearing a figure stood in shadows, thick tentacles swirling from its form, obscuring it further.<p><p>

"You will die like everything else reclaimer," the creature said in a low gravel voice. With that it disappeared into the jungle.

10. Ascension

****_Author's Note: _****Alright, so I was quicker updating this time. Chapter is kinda short, but next chapter will have more action.

****Chapter 9: Ascension****

As the light faded into the ground around his feet Nathan immediately took in his surroundings. The three had been teleported inside some kind of structure. The walls were a gray metal of some kind, and the ceiling was a few hundred feet up. The extensive corridors stretched on until they faded into the gloomy shadows that filled the structure.

The first thing Fenris heard was a faint skittering, and the distant growl of a flood warrior.

"We can't stay still long. We'll be overrun if we stay indoors," she informed her comrades.

"We will not be here long," the high, almost snobby voice of Guilty Spark said as the construct floated down to their eye level.

"What is this place?" Jimaelhae asked.

"This is the library, and it is here were we will find the transport needed to get to the Ark," Guilty Spark informed the trio.

As Guilty Spark was explaining about a ship that would be launched into the centre of Halo then fired through hyperspace back to Earth, she felt something pulling at her. She turned to face down the corridor, staring into the shadows.

"Where are you going?" Nathan asked grabbing her shoulder. Fenris blinked and looked back at him, only then realizing she had started walking away from them to follow whatever it was that was tugging at her soul.

"I'm not quite sure, but there's something down that way," Fenris said.

"Yes, that is the way that led to the index, however the index has already been taken. We must proceed onwards," Guilty Spark said.

"We can, and we will, but I am going to check out what's down there," Fenris said, and started walking again. Nathan and Jimaelhae decided to trust her instincts. Those instincts had after all saved them before. They walked for a few minutes, in silence with the exception of Guilty Spark who complained the entire way.

Finally Fenris took a right turn and walked up to one of the walls. She placed her hands on the wall, feeling it.

"Behind this," she said.

"There is nothing here, you are mistaken, now follow me," Guilty Spark stated.

Fenris moved her hands down the wall. There was a slight hiss and a section of the wall opened. Nathan and Jimaelhae smiled despite themselves. They both already had a great dislike for the machine following them, and to see it proved wrong was priceless to them.

"This doorway isn't in any of my records," Guilty Spark said, surprise obvious in his voice.

"That's because the Forerunners didn't want you to know about it," Fenris said as she stepped through the door. The other three followed her into the room.

* * *

>Cerberus stumbled into the camp, covered in dirt and blood. Brutes and Jackals watched him walk past, determined as he was to get to Barkarus's tent. He had not stopped moving since he had left the elite's temple, and he would report the success of his mission, to kill the elites inhabiting the ruins.<p><p>

After wandering through the camp, Cerberus soon stood in front of the chieftain's tent. Cerberus stood proud, not caring that doing so reopened the wound on his chest, sending another trickle of fresh blood to run down over his fur.

Barkarus emerged from the tent, and he looked at his chief soldier.

"The elites are dead chieftain," Cerberus said.

"If the elites are all dead then where are the rest of your brutes?" Barkarus asked, crossing his arms over his chest, glaring at Cerberus.

"They were all killed by a demon," Cerberus explained, the memory of the axe being planted in his chest replaying in his mind's eye.

"The demon was trapped on High Charity. Consumed by the flood by now. How could he be here to kill you brutes?" Barkarus demanded, rage beginning to fill his mind.

"Not the demon we have been warned about. A demon that we have not seen before. She killed brutes with her bare hands, tore out their throats. I've seen the damage she's done," Cerberus said, standing straighter to allow a better view of the wound on his chest.

"Another demon? I thought the others had all been killed on that wretched planet Reach," Barkarus said, slightly confused. The prophets had told him the others were all killed.

"No, this one was different. She appeared at first to be just another marine, but inside she was not human," Cerberus said.

"Regardless, there is a cruiser in orbit. We will leave this second demon here to fight the flood alone. We are going to Earth, where we will be able to crush the Humans once and for all, there is nothing else here for us," Barkarus commanded, and he headed back inside his tent. Cerberus stared at the tent into which his chieftain had disappeared for a moment before turning away and disappearing into the camp.

* * *

>Compared to the hallway this room was tiny, but it looked as if would be able to hold about thirty people without getting cramped. On the far wall was an old tablet with alien writing across it. Along the two side walls were human sized capsules, all had a red light above them.<p><p>

"What is this place?" Nathan asked.

"It appears to be a preparation chamber of some form. It appears similar to our own, however the technology here is much older," Jimaelhae explained, glancing over the room.

"Can you read the tablet?" Fenris asked.

"No, this writing is more ancient than our historians know," Jimaelhae replied, stepping further into the room.

Fenris followed, and as soon as she crossed the threshold, the light above one of the capsules turned to green. With a slight frown Fenris started towards the capsule. With each step the pains in her body became ever more intense. Her hands were twitching, and blood was running from her nose.

"Jesus Christ, help her," Nathan yelled out, about to run forward when Jimaelhae grabbed the marine.

"She knows what she does. This is her destiny," the Sangheili warrior said quietly.

Fenris stood in front of the capsule, as the brown evaporated from

her eyes, once again becoming the brilliant hazel and gold color. She struggled to raise her hands and placed them on the cold metal of the capsule. With a hiss the seal was broken and the front of the capsule lifted up.

Inside was a pair of blades the length of Fenris's arm, and a suit of armor. As she reached inside her headache vanished, her hands stopped twitching, and her nose stopped bleeding. She pulled out the blades, and found that her hands fit the grips perfectly.

"The reclaimer awakens," Jimaehae said softly.

* * *

>Cerberus looked up into the sky as the covenant cruiser lowered itself from orbit. The remainder of the covenant forces on the sacred ring were gathered here, ready to depart for Earth. Once there the remaining humans would be crushed.<p><p>

However, the brute could not shake the thought of the woman that had nearly killed him. Though Barkarus believed leaving her here would solve the problem, Cerberus was not so sure. If there was any way at all off this ring, she would find it. She would find it and hunt them down, and kill them.

Cerberus shook his head; it wouldn't do to have such thoughts of defeat in his head when preparing for the final battles. This invasion would be the last in the war, no matter the outcome.

The cruiser stopped lowering itself, and hovered a few thousand feet in the air. From the bottom a large metal disk detached and lowered to the ground, held in place by a translucent purple beam; the gravity lift that would load the troops into the hull of the cruiser.

Soon the great journey would begin.

* * *

>Fenris pulled the last bracer on over her forearm. The dark grey armor fit her perfectly, and protected all her vital organs. The cuirass covered her torso completely, and had edges along her stomach. The back had two sheaths for the blades, and two shoulder pads protected the shoulders. Her upper arms were bare, but bracers with edges running up them covered her forearms, connecting to gauntlets that still left her fingers unprotected, but flexible. There were plates over her groin, upper legs, knees, and a pair of boots that nearly went up to her knees.<p><p>

She had let her hair loose, so that it fell around her shoulders in a cascade of raven black. She turned to face her two comrades and the construct that was following them.

"How do you feel?" Nathan asked, almost cautiously, his gaze flicking to the pile of her old UNSC Marine Corps issued armor. She was still wearing the fatigues, though she had cut the arm sleeves off of her shirt.

"Better than I had for a long time, lets get going. Nothing else in here," came the reply as Fenris picked up her shotgun and battle

rifle.

"Quickly now, the flood know we are here now, they'll be here any minute," Guilty Spark exclaimed, and floated out of the room. Fenris sighed, and followed after the construct. Nathan and Jimaehae were not far behind.

* * *

>Barkarus smiled as his troops began to pile onto the gravity lift. They marched on by fives, and were carried up through the air into the cruiser. It wouldn't be long now.<p><p>

Shots rang out from the edges of the small army. Then screams. Barkarus looked out over the sea of his warriors to see what the problem was.

"The Flood are here," someone called out.

"No, not now," Barkarus said. He picked up his hammer, he would not let anything stop him now.

"Battle is upon us, fight them back. Kill them all," Barkarus roared above the din of the quickly escalating battle.

In the midst of the chaos Cerberus felt dread twist his gut. He wasn't strong enough yet to give his full potential in battle. He knew if Barkarus stayed the Covenant would loose, and if they got to the gravity lift. They would be released upon the galaxy.

"Don't let them get to the gravity lift," Cerberus tried to yell.

That was until he saw one figure in particular emerge from the jungle with the hordes of Flood warriors.

Captain Miranda Keyes.

_Author's Note: _the blades Fenris has now look like the blades that appeared on the heroic and legendary difficulty icons from the game. I had to fit them in.

11. The Cruiser

Author's Note: Sorry about the long updating time. I was up in Meaford for a month for training. Anywho, finally got Chapter 10 up, hope you all enjoy.

Chapter 10: The Cruiser

Guilty Spark stopped and turned to the three soldiers following it.

"The Flood are assaulting the covenant forces before they can board their ship," the construct informed the trio.

"Good, let them tear each other apart," Nathan spat.

"Wait. If the brutes are trying to board a ship to leave— if the

parasite manages to board that ship in their stead they will have free reign across the galaxy," Jimaelhae pointed out.

"Oh fuck," Nathan said as realization dawned.

"So, shall we go help the bastards?" Fenris asked, cracking her knuckles in anticipation. Jimaelhae glanced at her before looking back up at Guilty Spark.

"Would you be able to teleport us to the site of the cruiser, as you have teleported us here," Jimaelhae asked. Guilty Spark hovered in place for a moment, computing information.

"Affirmative, however if we take precious time to stall the Flood from reaching the cruiser than the Ark may be reached by the covenant," Guilty Spark informed them.

Fenris looked at the other two in turn, then took a step forward and looked directly into the blue light that almost seemed to serve as Guilty Spark's eye.

"If we don't stop the flood here it won't matter who reaches the Ark, cause the flood could very well already be there. Take us to the Flood now," Fenris demanded, crossing her arms over her chest.

Guilty Spark again hovered in place, his light blinked a few times.

"Very well," he finally agreed, and Fenris smiled.

* * *

>Cerberus let out a roar as he threw one of the flood warriors above his head. The beam from a beam rifle ripped through it, and killed it. He was on the edge of the covenant soldiers, fighting the flood head on. There were hordes of the parasite though. He didn't even know that there had been this many humans and covenant on the ring.
<p>The creature that had once been Miranda Keyes was standing just at the edge of the jungle. Tentacles had erupted from her back and shoulders, her torso and legs had thickened, and her arms now ended in claws. Her head was mostly unchanged, except for the fact that her once well groomed hair was now messy and greasy, her eyes were gummed shut, and her nose had shrunk into her skull.</p>

Another warrior came at him, Cerberus pounded in its chest with his fists, letting out a roar of anger. His meaty paws smashed through the flood that came after him. That was, until there was an immense pain in his side. One of the ex-marines had fired a shotgun into his side, exposing his intestines.

Cerberus went to smash the parasite ridden creature when battle rifle rounds peppered his back. Cerberus stumbled, then picked up the shotgun flood and threw him into the crowd of flood warriors.

Breathing heavily the brute turned to face the oncoming horde. He knew his death was coming, so he charged them. From another part of the battlefield Barkarus watched his best soldier charge headfirst into the Flood horde. Bodies went flying from him as he drove into

the crowd like a train, but his momentum was quickly stalled. The Flood surged upon Cerberus, tearing him apart limb by limb. Intestines flew above the heads of the brutal Flood warriors, followed by an arm, and Cerberus's head.

* * *

>Barkarus roared, and smashed a few flood away with his hammer. He wasn't sure how to use the force field that the hammer generated, but his skill with the weapon ensured him that it didn't matter. He batted away each of the Flood warriors that came after him, crushing their bodies with each blow. <p>The chieftain brought his hammer back to strike at another flood warrior. He lined up the swing and started to bring it forward, when it suddenly lost all momentum. He looked back only to see tentacles wrapped around the shaft of the hammer. Barkarus followed the tentacles back to the infested Miranda Keyes, her eyeless face seeming to stare directly at him.<p>

"The fall of the covenant is nigh," she said, voice low, gravely.

The tentacles pulled back, yanking the hammer from the brute's grasp. Barkarus stumbled slightly, and that was enough to let a flood warrior to jump on his back. The creature had once been an elite, but now that it had been assimilated by the parasite, the alien warrior was barely recognizable. It drove a tentacle through Barkarus's shoulder, severing tendons and dislocating the joint.

Another warrior stabbed Barkarus through the knee, bringing him to the ground. He let out a growl of fury, and used his good hand to swipe the first flood warrior off his back before it could strike again. He was about to hit the second one when Keyes grabbed his arm with her tentacles.

Barkarus struggled to free himself, but Keyes was too strong. The tentacles began to squeeze, and the brute chieftain couldn't help but let out a roar of pain as the bones in his forearm were slowly crushed.

Then he noticed the controller form of the parasite scuttling down Keyes's tentacle. His eyes went wide with something Barkarus had never felt before; fear. He wouldn't be able to fight the small creature off, and it would consume his soul.

He pulled on his arm, fear and determination lending him strength. All he succeeded in doing was dislocating his one good shoulder. On his knees, one useless arm hanging at his side, the other being held above him, and his head hung low, Barkarus knew this was his end. It wasn't the death he had imagined.

He felt tiny legs crawling across the fur on his chest; pulling on it as it scrabbled to the centre of his torso. Once it had found a comfortable position it started to burrow into his flesh, somehow squeezing between his ribs. Barkarus felt something growing inside him, felt his body begin to go numb as something grew along his spinal column.

The last thing he did consciously was look up at Keyes, and spit at her.

* * *

>As soon as the white light had faded Fenris was at a run towards the sounds of battle, with Jimaehae close behind her. <p>"Fuck," Nathan muttered under his breath, he knew they were going to charge head on without overlooking the battle field.<p>

He struggled to keep up with them much less catch up, but still he tried, pushing himself to his limits, almost to the point where he couldn't breathe. He was already tired from all the time he had spent on this damn ring, fighting, running, but rarely resting. His body ached, and half the time his eyelids were feeling heavy. He was running on adrenaline and nothing more, but now he could feel it catching up to him. He was only human after all.

"Slow the fuck down," he wheezed, and falling to his knees. Jimaehae stopped first, then Fenris a split second afterwards. They walked over to Nathan who almost felt as if he wanted to throw up, but he hadn't eaten anything since landing on this ringâ€| he wasn't even sure how long it had been. Too long was all he could think.

"Come on we have to hurry," Fenris said, edging towards where she knew the battle was taking place.

"We can't just charge in, getting ourselves killed won't accomplish anything except helping the flood," Nathan said, looking up at his two companions.

"He is correct," Jimaehae said looking over at Fenris, who nodded in reluctant acceptance.

Nathan got to his feet and brought his breathing back under control. When he was ready he cracked his knuckles.

"All right, now let's go and kick some ass," the sergeant said. Fenris couldn't help but let a small smile cross her face at those words. The three started off at a slower jog.

After a few minutes they came to a knoll overlooking the battlefield between the flood and covenant forces. There was blood everywhere, and the covenant numbers were dwindling fast. The survivors were scattered, fighting in small pockets of unorganized resistance. Flood warriors had slaughtered the jackals sniping from the gravity platform and had begun to stream up into the ship. One particular creature caught Nathan's eye.

"No, it can't be," he muttered.

"Officer status isn't going to make her immune to the flood," Fenris whispered back, following Nathan's gaze.

"Noâ€| she's become exactly like another creature I killed earlier. It's different from the rest," Nathan said.

* * *

>Nathan stood up, panting, covered in yellowish blood, and saw a beast with six tentacles coming from its back. It just emerged from the forest, walking with an eerie calmness that a human would possess. Amy had just reloaded her shotgun, and she looked up. <p>"What the

fuck is that?" she demanded of anyone who could provide her with an answer. When none came she brought the butt of the shotgun to her shoulder, aiming at the things chest.<p>

Until it's tentacles snapped forward, and easily tore Amy apart, like she was a doll. Nathan stared in horror. What the hell was he going to do now.

"You cannot stand before us reclaimer," it said in a low gravely voice, shocking Nathan. It stepped forward. Nathan threw his gun at it, but a tentacle hit the gun, breaking it in half. The tentacles wrapped around Nathan, lifted him into the air, and threw him into a puddle.

Nathan lifted his face from the muddy water, spitting some out. He could hear it behind him. He spun onto his back, and jumped to his feet. He charged the creature, though he didn't really intend to do anything by it. The creature simply swatted him aside.

"You are the reclaimers that we have feared. You are weak," it said.

Nathan spit blood from his mouth, and looked up at the thing approaching him. It's tentacles snapped forward and enrobed him. The creature lifted Nathan a few feet above the ground. Nathan looked down at it, and what disturbed him most was that the thing seemed not to have any eyes.

"What are you?" he asked.

"I am the avatar, we are the Flood," it said, almost like it had practiced this before. It's tentacles began to constrict, taking the air out of Nathan's lungs. He couldn't breathe, blackness was creeping in around the edges of his vision. He was going to die here, he had failed.

"You are weak, you can't hold anything" the creature said, and Nathan screamed.

* * *

>

"It still dies like other ones then," Fenris said, and Nathan nodded in grim determination.

The Miranda creature was flung up through the purple beam connecting the ground with the covenant cruiser floating in the sky. Nathan's eyes followed her, while Fenris and Jimaelhae looked over the small pockets of battles. The pockets were growing smaller in both size and number. The strongest group was a few wounded brutes lashing out at the oncoming flood warriors with theirs fists.

That was until a carrier form wandered amongst them. One brute in a rage struck out against it. The others looked on in horror as the creature exploded. The force of the explosion threw their bodies away and the gasses held inside melted their flesh. Only one of the alien warriors was still alive. A piece of its skull was gleamed white beneath the flow of crimson blood. Its hand, nearly burnt away, reached out as if for help. A infested marine jumped on the brute's

back and drove a clawed hand through its head, splattering brains across the ground.

"So are we going down there?" Nathan asked as he diverted his attention back to the ground.

"I do not see a chieftain," Jimaehae noted.

"Dead, infested, or fighting on the cruiser. Whichever it is it's not good. I think we're too late," Fenris muttered angrily.

With each second more and more flood piled onto the gravity lift and were lifted into the ship. The covenant were nearly wiped out. Suddenly the gravity beam shut off, and the cruiser came to life. It slowly started to lift even higher into the sky.

"Shit! we better see if we can get back because I think the flood are headed off to the Ark," Nathan said.

Fenris nodded, and Guilty Spark was suddenly behind the three soldiers.

"I told you, now you must hurry, the escape pod is waiting," Guilty Spark said. The flood heard Guilty Spark's loud voice and began to run up the hill. Fenris raised her rifle and started to fire off shots.

"Hurry and get that fucking teleportation shit going," Nathan yelled at the construct.

Within a few seconds bright yellow rings surrounded the three and their vision began to fade to white.

"I am beginning to dislike this," Jimaehae grumbled. The last thing Fenris saw before everything faded to white was a flood warrior's claw slashing at her face.

12. Escape

****_Author's Note: _****Sorry about the long time updating, writer's block hit me like a train. This is the final chapter of this particular part of the trilogy, I will hopefully begin word on part 3 soon enough. I hope you've enjoyed, or at least been entertained by this story, and I'll try to do better with part 3.

****Chapter 11: Escape****

The white light faded and the arm of the flood warrior fell to cold metallic floor of the ancient forerunner structure. Fenris looked down at the severed limb on the floor, as her two comrades looked around their new location.

"Back in the library," Nathan muttered, checking over his rifle, quickly growing bored of the bland and sterile environment.

The growls of flood emanated from down the corridor. Jimaehae lifted his carbine with one hand, head glaring down the so far empty corridor.

"Ever notice that even though each teleportation only takes a few seconds, it feels like its been months," Nathan said.

Fenris and Jimaelhae looked at him, Fenris's eyebrow slightly raised. Nathan merely shrugged.

"Just an observation," he muttered.

A blue light appeared as Guilty Spark floated down from the ceiling. The three warriors looked up apprehensively at the small hovering metal orb.

"We must hurry, there is no time to waist, we must reach the arc," the AI construct said, the blue light flickering as it 'spoke'.

"Well lead on, we have no idea how to get through this place," Fenris said with a low growl, and Nathan let out a low chuckle. Jimaelhae crossed his arms over his chest and stared up at Guilty Spark.

"Yes of course," the construct said, and began moving down the hall, away from the growls of the flood the trio noted with approval. As the small robotic construct began moving, his glow lit the bland walls with a easy blue light that was somehow calming.

Guilty Spark passed by a vent, which Nathan and Jimaelhae ignored, but Fenris put her full attention on. There was something within the darkness of the vent, she could smell it.

A flood warrior burst from the shadows with a guttural snarl. It soared through the air with outstretched claws, intending to tear into Nathan's chest. Fenris pushed the marine sergeant out of the way and swung one of her blades in an arc before her, severing the creature's arm and head. The flood warrior collapsed on the floor, and used its single remaining arm to push itself to its feet. Fenris threw her sword, impaling the monstrosity through the chest, finally killing it.

"Holy shit," Nathan yelled out as Fenris planted a foot on the creature's chest and pulled her blade free. With her free hand she wiped the dark yellow blood from her face.

"We have to hurry," Jimaelhae said as his own ears picked up the sounds of advancing Flood. He looked behind them and was soon able to make out grotesque silhouettes of the Flood advancing upon them, their growls reaching a crescendo.

Nathan and Fenris both raised their battle rifles and looked through the sights.

"Fuckâ€¦ lets move," Nathan said, and the three took off down the hallway, the sounds of their boots striking the floor being drowned out by the growing sound of the Flood's growling.

The trio passed by another vent, and another Flood warrior leapt from the darkness of the opening. Fenris dropped to a knee and raised her shotgun, firing a single blast into the creature's chest. The creature's momentum through the air was halted completely, and it collapsed lifeless to the ground.

Nathan looked over his shoulder in time to see the Flood nearly upon them. He raised his rifle and fired three quick bursts into their ranks, but only saw a few of the creatures fall.

"Mustâ€¦ goâ€¦. Faster!" Nathan yelled out loudly in the voice he had developed as a sergeant in the UNSC marine corps.

Fenris and Jimaelhae had no problem listening to him and they took off as fast as they could down the hall, slowly only for Nathan's sake. To allow him to catch up they would stop and fire bursts of fire into the oncoming Flood.

Above them, Guilty Spark suddenly turned towards what looked like a huge set of doors.

"Give me a moment, the doors will be open momentarily," the construct said.

"Fucking hurry!" Fenris yelled, standing in front of the door and shouldering her shotgun. The other two took up firing positions on either side of her, and they began firing into the oncoming horde while Guilty Spark brought up a holographic console and started going through the processes to open the giant steel doors.

The flood were getting closer, Nathan bit his lower lip as he fired burst after burst into the creatures. Yellow blood sprayed from the exit wounds as bullets tore through their bodies. Whenever a round punched through the chest the creature would be instantly killed. But there were so many.

Fenris let out a snarl as her shotgun clicked empty. She reached for more shells, and discovered that she was out. She flipped the shotgun through the air so she gripped it by the barrel, and braced herself for the coming melee.

Nathan's rifle ran dry. He automatically ejected the magazine, and slammed in a fresh one. He hit the bolt catch, sending another round into the chamber, and started his barrage of bullets into the grotesque horde fast approaching.

Jimaelhae's carbine spat out green bolts of death, scorching through the mottled flesh of the warriors fast approaching. The energy pod within the weapon depleted, and the Sangheilli warrior could no longer fire his weapon. He knew he no spare pods, and so threw the useless Covenant weapon to the side, and pulled out his knife, and dropped into the same fighting stance he had used when fighting Vartainee on top of the ruins.

"Hurry up you damn robot, I don't want this to be our last stand!" Nathan yelled out, as he fired another burst.

Just as he spoke the door began to crawl open. All three hurried through the small opening as it continued to grind into the metal walls to its sides.

"Close it!" Fenris yelled, turning around, and smashing a once human marine across the face with her shotgun, sending the creature sprawling backwards into the others close behind.

"I cannot merely close the doors until they have been opened all the

way. To do otherwise would damage the system," the construct informed her.

"Fuck the system! We'll die if those doors aren't closed," Nathan screamed out, as he fired a burst into the widening gap in the middle of the doors.

Guilty Spark took a few moments to register what it had been told, then proceeded to open a separate holographic console on the other side of the door, closing the old one. The construct began to work through the system to close the heavy doors, while the three warriors fought viciously to keep the flood at bay.

Nathan could feel sweat gathering on his brow under his helmet, before it rolled down his face. He could feel warmth from under his skin in his hands and armpits. He was scared, he didn't know if he would make it through this time. After all he had been through he could very well die because a fucking door wouldn't close.

After what seemed like an eternity the two large slabs of forerunner metal stopped opening, and began to move closer together. A surge of adrenaline burst through Nathan's veins. He let out a loud laugh, firing a burst clean into a warrior's chest.

Jimaelhae danced amongst the flood, his knife slashing in wide arcs, severing limbs and cutting through the chest and infectious controller that attached itself to the spine of entities to bring them into the flood. Fenris was in a rage, the butt of her shotgun smashing violently into her enemies, crushing their chest cavities. Corpses piled around the two soldiers as they fought on, while Nathan covered them from further away, though his own ammunition was quickly dwindling.

He didn't know what he would do if such happened. Yes he had killed an avatar, yes he had survived the darkness of the jungle. But he would not be able to fight them without a gun, he just wasn't strong enough.

There was a loud thump as the doors closed, and blood spurted from between the metal doors as one of the flood was crushed. All three soldiers panted, but quickly collected themselves and turned to Guilty Spark.

"Are you ready to proceed? The escape pod is down this tunnel. Your pilot is awaiting your arrival," Guilty Spark informed them.

"Our pilot?" Jimaelhae asked in confusion. Fenris merely shrugged and followed the glowing A.I. construct. The other two sighed and followed her.

They walked for what seemed like hours, though in truth it was probably only a few minutes. Finally they reached a much smaller door. As Guilty Spark approached the door hissed open, revealing a pitch black room, and a single glowing red light closer to the door.

"Well Tinkerbelle, welcome back! and you've brought guests," a familiar voice said. Nathan couldn't help but smile as Sgt. Avery Johnson stepped out of the room, combat cap snug on his head, and cigar smoking in his mouth.

* * *

>The creature that was once Captain Miranda Keyes of the UNSC navy, stood on the bridge of the captured Covenant cruiser. The newly infested brutes and jackals manned the piloting stations of the cruiser. Even though Miranda had never known how to use the ship, the Covenant had, all she had to do was order them.<p><p>

Upon her command, the gravity lift was removed, and the ship started to ascend into orbit. Their destination was Earth, Miranda had known where that was, and so passed the information on to be entered into the navigational systems. Once there, they would find the ark, and the entire universe would belong to the flood.

* * *

>"Good to see you still kicking Avery," Nathan said to his old friend.<p><p>

"Nice to see your ugly ass to, now lets get moving, we have a boat to catch and a world to save," the brash sergeant said, turning on his heel and walking into the darkness of the room.

Guilty Spark pulsed once and lights snapped on all across the room. The room wasn't very wide, but it was tall, with a set of doors similar to that Fenris, Nathan and Jimaelhae had seen earlier. The room was a launching bay, and in the centre was a cone shaped space craft, it's bulk filled most of the room, and its height reached eight metres tall.

"This is the escape pod. Quickly now, time is of the utmost importance," Guilty Spark commanded.

The four soldiers looked at the hovering construct, before turning to face the escape pod. As they looked on at the silvery craft, a ramp slowly opened directly in front of the quartet.

"Quickly," Guilty Spark urged as he accessed another console to open the doors above.

Nathan looked up out of instinct, and saw a rocket, smoke trailing behind it, heading directly towards the floor where they stood.

"Fuck get on," the marine sergeant commanded.

The other three looked up as Nathan bolted for the escape pod. Luckily rockets were slow moving, so the three had time to react, jumping onboard. Guilty Spark flew in just behind them, and the ramp closed. The interior was lit only by the construct's pulsating light.

The inside had five seats, four in a neat square formation, with a fifth directly in the centre. What appeared to be controls were situated directly in front of the fifth seat.

As the explosion of the rocket striking outside sounded through the ancient craft, Sgt. Johnson strapped himself into the pilot seat, while the other three chose three random seats for themselves,

securing themselves in place.

A screen flickered to life on the control panels sitting in front of the Sgt, who let a smile cross his face.

"I can see them, they can't see me. HA!" Sgt. Johnson said with a barking laugh at the end, cigar still secure in his mouth. His hands seemed to know exactly where to go on the controls to work the craft.

A rumbling sounded through the craft as the small engines warmed themselves up. Nathan looked around the surroundings, as bleak as the library itself was, the only thing that wasn't a bland metallic surface was the control panel that Johnson was using, and the hard seats the other three had seated themselves on.

"Alright, hold on to your asses, we're going for a ride," the sergeant said, as the craft began to lift off. Johnson saw the flood warriors leaping at the craft and breaking their bodies upon the impact, and he smiled with satisfaction.

Jimaehae sat in his seat, he knew the craft was headed for Earth, he knew he would be fighting there, but for whom? Was the covenant split there as well, or were the elites and humans still fighting? The sangheilli warrior looked at those that had become his comrades, the test of loyalty for him was approaching.

Fenris tilted her head back and closed her eyes. Her destiny was unfolding, an ancient duty given to her millennia before she had even been born. Yet she was the only one of her kind left. Would she be able to fight the coming battle alone, when it was meant to be fought by thousands like her? She let out a deep breath, the coming trials would mean not only life or death for her, but for the entire galaxy. If the humans didn't win, everything would die.

Nathan looked down at his hands, his gloves were still stained with blood. Sara's blood, Mike's blood. Since he had escaped the jungle, he wondered why he had been allowed to live, when they had been sentenced for death. He had nothing left, they had had everything back at home. He knew the answer now, he was their avenging angel, he would ensure they had not died in vain. He was returning to Earth, the seed of humanity, and he would fulfill his duty, he would avenge his fallen comrades.

It was payback time.

* * *

>The gravemind's essence searched through the empty halls of high charity, it could sense the presence of the human A.I.<p><p>

"I have questions, and you will answer," it grumbled.

"Shoot," Cortanna answered simply.

The gravemind responded with a deep laugh. The A.I. simply didn't understand. This was the endgame, she was naught but a pawn. The universe would belong to the flood, and the A.I. would help them, even as the corrupting essence of the gravemind leaked into the circuitry of the Covenant systems.

End
file.